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Heroes of Faith



by the
Rev. Dr. Guthrie



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HEROES OF FAITH.



HEROES OF FAITH

AS DELINEATED IN HEBREWS.

BY

JOHN GUTHRIE, M.A., D.D.

"By faith ye stand" (2 Cor. i. 24).



GLASGOW:

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Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city (Heb. xi. 1-16).



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HEROES OF FAITH.

I.

FAITH.

THE Epistle to the Hebrews is peculiar in every feature. The people to whom it was addressed, their past, their present, the intense Judaism they had left, the intense Pentecostal Christianity they embraced in its stead, the intensely vexatious, though (thanks to their Roman masters), on the whole, bloodless persecution that was now drifting some of them into apostasy, and the intensity of argumentation, warning, and appeal by which the inspired author of this Epistle seeks to confirm or reclaim them, present a *tout ensemble* of impassioned and strongly-marked singularities which could meet only in the Palestinian Christianity of that age.

Confining our view to the last particular—the line of argument and appeal by which the writer strives to confirm them—its one main feature is, to hold up Jesus to their view, to urge on them faith, and to warn them against unbelief. Processes of deep and intricate reasoning, doctrinal and textual, are abruptly relieved by explosions of practical appeal, in which the most awful warnings to be found in the book of God are followed by tenderest remonstrance and encouragement, and skies black with threatened doom are spanned by loveliest rainbows of promise.

So find we in the Eleventh Chapter, with which we have now

specially to do. The terrible warnings against apostasy in the previous chapter are suddenly made to give place to words of affectionate reminiscence, recalling their own past heroism for the faith, and personal and self-sacrificing kindness to him, "knowing that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance." Recollections so sacred tend, if anything tends, to cause deep stirrings of heart. Into these, as into fresh pulverized soil, the sacred writer throws the counsel not to "cast away their confidence,"—charitably crediting them with it still,—seeing that it carried in its bosom "great recompense of reward." This recompense should accrue to them at the second coming of their Lord, which, he assures them, was alike glorious in its significance and certain in the event.

This assurance he tenderly enforces by an application to the coming Jesus of some of the words of Habakkuk (ii. 3), which, fully quoted, are these:—"Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." The whole passage of the prophet is instinct with the spirit of truest evangelism. And having found so much in it to his purpose, the inspired penman could hardly fail to draw also on the verse that follows, the most important of the whole, and one specially dear to the apostle Paul. "Behold," says the prophet, "his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." The writer of our Epistle quotes this last expression first, the real meaning of which is: The man who is just (or justified) by his faith, shall live, or attain to everlasting life. He then quotes freely the statement that precedes, as given in the Septuagint version: "but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." This is just, in effect, the prophet's warning, flooded with New Testament light. Its drift is: We have acceptance with God now, and shall have glory hereafter, on

the same principle as Abraham had it—only by faith. To this glory we shall attain only by persevering in the faith. If, instead of so persisting, “any man draw back,” so far from his finding divine acceptance, God “will have no pleasure in him.” This back-shrinking tendency some of these Palestinian Christians were only too clearly evincing; but the writer, with his large loving soul, not caring to see this too distinctly, throws his charities and sympathies upon it point-blank, like a resistless sea, in the rallying words: “But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb. x. 32-39).

Such is the context. Its pervading doctrine and lesson are: As only the just by faith shall live, let the already wavering professor recall himself to that faith, stand fast in it, and persevere therein to the end, if he would be finally saved. Its point and pith are gathered up in its closing expression—“Believe to the saving of the soul.” This is the kernel out of which the sacred writer evolves the animating lessons and illustrations of this eleventh chapter—a grand tableau in which the several heroes of faith stand forth and act in as life-like forms as ever appeared in historical picture or sculptured frieze. As the previous chapter ended with faith, this begins with faith. It appropriately prefaces its brilliant roll of examples by some account of that master-principle which, in varying forms and degrees, ruled and triumphed in them all. This it gives in the cardinal words, the text and key-note to all that follows: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The absence of the article in the original indicates that we are here to understand faith in its general and most comprehensive acceptance.

Is this to be regarded as a definition of faith? It may, or it may not, according to the sense intended. A philological definition it clearly is not. A psychological definition it as certainly is not. A theological definition it just as little is; but

1 in a philosophic or practical sense it might fairly enough be regarded as a definition; relatively, that is to say, to the lessons taught in the preceding context, and to the animating motives deduced from the future "recompense of reward." We have here a definition, and a very perfect one, of the vitally important place which faith holds in these connections. Were any polemic, however, to go to this text for the determination of the many theological controversies about faith, he would wholly miss the mark. He would merely torture the words to ends for which they were never meant. For this reason we would rather not call this a definition, but simply accept it as a description of faith, and a description shaped entirely to the practical purpose on hand; a description, too, so profoundly philosophic and far-reaching as to find embodiment and illustration in all the examples that are ranged under it.

It may conduce to clearness and completeness of conception if we endeavour to explain, first, the general doctrine of faith, and next, the particular description which the apostle here gives of it.

I. On the general doctrine of faith we have need to carry ourselves warily. As no theological tenet can be more vital, so none has been more discussed. From these manipulations, as some one drily but only too justly remarks, faith has too often emerged, like crystal from the same ordeal,—a thing clear enough as it stands, but none the brighter for the handling.

To proceed after this caveat to range our definition of faith under the three heads of Philological, Psychological, and Theological, looks uncommonly like falling overhead into the very pit we have been warning against, and "darkening counsel by words without wisdom." And yet, pedantic as the terms sound, we feel driven by our line of thought to adopt them as being, on the whole, the fittest to serve our end. In simpler parlance, "faith" may be defined as a form of Language; as a form of *Thought*; and as a form of Doctrine.

I. *Philologically viewed*, or as a form of Language, we have simply to inquire, What, according to Scripture usage, is the meaning of the words and illustrative phrases which the inspired writers employ to denote faith? If these be only taken in the spirit in which they have been given, as terms used in their well-known sense, and meant to be understood, faith, as seen in their light, becomes simple enough. This will still further appear when we strip it of certain accidentals that have caused confusion to some minds, and prevented them from seeing it in its native simplicity.

First, drop out of view, for the present, its secondary meaning of *faithfulness*. This secondary meaning it unquestionably has in the sacred originals both of the Old Testament and the New; just as it has in our own and in other languages. It were easy to cite texts where this meaning occurs; for example, Deut. xxxii. 20; Mat. xxiii. 23; Gal. v. 22; Tit. ii. 10. It were also interesting to trace the process of thought by which faith evolved itself into its secondary meaning of faithfulness. But as there is seldom any difficulty in discerning the cases in which this secondary sense occurs, and as it is quite distinct from the other, we should only cumber our present inquiry by now dwelling upon it.

Again, give no harbour to the notion that there is any mystic distinction between faith and belief. Though both words occur in our version, they occur interchangeably; as may be seen from Eph. ii. 8; 2 Thes. ii. 13; Heb. xi. 6. And that both do thus occur is simply owing to the composite character of our language, and in particular to its feature of dualism, in having for its main constituents the Saxon and the Latin; whence it happens that we have often pairs of words to express the same idea, where other languages have but one. "Faith" comes to us from the Latin root, and "belief" from the Saxon; that is the sole distinction; and it is here a distinction without a difference. In the sacred originals the word they represent is, *either*

case, but one. The notion, then, that faith is a more sacred or mysterious word than belief is utterly devoid of foundation, either in the sacred languages or in our own.

What, then, is the primary and proper meaning of faith and belief? It is simply to apprehend a testimony as true. Its proper field is the Unseen. What we see, hear, or otherwise perceive, we do not believe, we *know*. What we can logically or mathematically demonstrate, we do not believe, we know. What we are conscious of in our inner spirit, such as love, fear, sincerity, or the like, we do not believe, we know. And in certain fields of truth, what at first was only faith, may, by subsequent demonstration, ripen itself to knowledge. Hence gospel faith, resting as it does on the surest of grounds, is sometimes denominated in Scripture, "the knowledge of the truth." But belief has properly to do with things not personally known, with things of which doubt is predicable, or conceivable; for example, with matters of history, with things in the past or in the future, with things distant, or things unseen.

This definition holds none the less true that faith and the connected idea of trust are sometimes used to express each other. In classic Greek the idea of trust is prominent in their use of the word faith. In the Old Testament the aspect of trust in like manner predominates. But in the New Testament the primary and proper meaning of the word, as denoting the intellectual act of believing the truth, stands out clear as in the light of seven suns.

The two things, faith and trust, though used to express each other, are by no means to be confounded. When faith is so used it implies trust, or reliance, as its sure and practical effect. When trust is thus used it presupposes faith, or belief, as its antecedent and necessary condition. I trust myself among company, on a bridge, in a ship, in a contract; I trust myself with my banker, my foreign agent, my servant, my master, my lawyer, my physician: and I do so in each case on the strength

of an antecedent belief that they are, to the extent in which they are trusted, worthy of my trust.

Thus, from whatever point contemplated, faith philologically viewed, when stripped of its adjuncts, and traced to its proper significance, simply means the belief of a testimony. It implies that the testimony is understood, and that it is accepted as true. We now come, in the—

2d. place, to define faith *Psychologically*, or as an operation of the mind. It is clearly a mode of thinking, as distinguished from feeling and willing; and this may be seen in the very etymology of the original word, which is derived from the verb to persuade. It may be recognized also in our familiar modes of speech. When we believe some historical fact, as that Alexander overran the eastern world, we do not *feel* that he did, we *think* that he did. We may feel astonished at his impetuous dash, but this is no part of the belief, but an emotion consequent upon it. When we believe a threat we do not *feel* that evil will come (though some incorrectly so speak); we *think*, on what appears to us good grounds, that it will come. We may feel dread in connection therewith, but the dread is not the faith, but the effect of it. When we believe a promise we do not *feel* that good will come, we *think* that it will; and whatever connected feeling we may have, such as desire, or joy, or hope, is but the fruit of the belief, and not the belief itself, or any part of it. To cite in opposition to this certain passages which speak of "believing with the heart," is to quote sound and not sense; for none who know the original need to be told that the word "heart" is there, as often elsewhere, used to denote the spirit or entire inner man; the thinking part of which, or the intelligence, being that exercised in believing.

Now it is generally agreed that all mental states and acts, however numerous and diversified, are reducible to the three heads of thinking, feeling, and willing. These words explain themselves. We are all conscious that each of these things is different

from the other; and yet to one or other of them belongs every mental act or state that can be named. Though thus distinct, they are intimately related. They are not three minds, but only the one mind in three several states. We are so constituted that our thinking influences our feeling, and both influence our willing; and that all overflow into action, conduct, and character.

Our thinking, then, according as it is right or wrong may have vital consequences. It may be the taking in of mental food or of mental poison. Hence the weighty Scripture saying: "As a man thinketh in his heart (or mind) so is he." He thinks in the line in which he chooses to think, for his will is free; and it is by virtue of this power of which we are all conscious, of voluntary attention, that is, of choosing to think of this object rather than of that,—and in this particular way rather than in that,—that we have an *indirect* control over our faith, and may reach saving truth if we will; and on this ground it is that man is responsible to God for his belief.

In faith, then, we must see well both to its Act and its Object. We must see to the Act, that we think, investigate, and decide clearly, intelligently, dispassionately, taking all sides of truth into account, availing ourselves of all needed helps, throwing aside prejudice and preconception, and setting ourselves "in an honest and good heart" to seek truth as truth, to buy it at any price, and sell it at none. If we neglect the act or exercise of faith we of course forfeit all. The richest viands may be set before the famishing and the most sovereign medicines before the sick, but unless they are taken and used the result will be nil. Be this realized in the outset, that the whole man may be aroused to the act and exercise of faith as vital to our eternal weal.

But when this attitude has been taken, and the mind is on the alert and eager to yield "the obedience of faith," from that moment let the whole attention be directed to the object of

faith; for in the object or thing to be believed the whole vitality lies. This is simply but lucidly and most forcibly illustrated in the following statements of Dr. Morison in his admirable treatise on *Saving Faith*.

“Compare faith to a *hand*.—Let us suppose that the soul is indigent. It *is* indigent. It has ‘wasted its substance on riotous living,’ and is reduced to the most abject poverty. *It needs to hold out its hand for ‘an alms.’* That is the attitude of the convicted soul. But the mere outstretching of the hand will not satisfy its craving wants. And when once the hand is held out, the mere folding of the fingers upon themselves will do no good. It is the thing grasped that will do good. But what if it be a stone? What if it be a serpent? What if it be a counterfeit coin, or a forged bank-note? What then? No relief will be experienced. Positive injury may be the result. *All depends on the nature of the object which is received by the hand.*

“Change the figure. The act of faith may be compared to *the act of eating*.—‘Come ye, buy and eat’ (Isaiah lv. 1). The soul is hungry. It is in danger of perishing for want. It must eat or die. But the mere act of eating will do no good. It is the thing eaten, and it alone, that can nourish. The thing eaten, however, must be of a nourishing nature. Suppose that the man should eat what is utterly indigestible. What then? Suppose that he should eat what is positively poisonous. What then? The act of eating might be perfect; but could he be nourished? It is the thing eaten, or the object on which the act of eating takes effect, that is of transcendent importance.

“Or consider believing under the figure of *looking*.—‘Look unto me, and be ye saved.’ (Isaiah xlv. 22). Look unto Jesus as he was lifted up on the accursed tree. The act of looking is indispensable. If the eyes are closed, and nothing be seen, no benefit can be received. But even though the eyes should look, that is not enough. Suppose that they look, not unto

Jesus, but on the dust of the ground, or on the fiery flying serpents in the air, or on self, or on some 'sow wallowing in the mire,' the mere act of looking at such objects will utterly fail to give 'peace and joy and hope,' happiness and holiness. It is the nature of the object looked at that affects the mind of the beholder, either with pleasure or with pain, either with delight or with disgust, or with indifference.

"Compare believing to *coming*.—'Come unto me,' says Jesus, 'all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Mat. xi. 28). The act of coming *is* indispensable, but the result of the act is entirely dependent on the direction taken by the locomotive soul, and on the nature of the object that is reached. Suppose that one comes, not to a friend, but to a foe! Suppose that one comes, not to a home, but into the heart of an ambush. What then? Or what if he comes towards a pitfall or a precipice, and then continues to advance? What then? The act of motion may, *as an act*, be all that could be desired; but the result of the movement would be disastrous.

"It is the object, then, the object, that is the matter of transcendent moment. The inquiry of the spirit should not so much be, *How am I to believe?* as *What am I to believe?* The attention should be fixed not on *the right way of believing*, but on *the right thing to be believed*" (pp. 79-83).

This, then, is faith Psychologically viewed. It only remains now, in this general definition, to consider it in the—

3d place, *Theologically*, or as a form of doctrine. Here, in the light of what has been already advanced, a few words will suffice. In strictest harmony with all moral and mental philosophy, the Gospel promulgates to us a salvation to be received by faith. Infidelity itself, in opposing it, yea, and in opposing this very feature of it, namely, that the Gospel professes to save us by means of our believing it, proceeds on the self-same principle, and exemplifies the very thing it condemns, for it

seeks to rid or save human souls from the yoke of the Christian superstitions by an appeal to their reason, and a demand on their faith. No other way is possible or conceivable with rational beings. Grant only that we are not saved by stark Omnipotence, as orbs are made to spin through space, but by truth and love, as free and responsible intelligences, and the Christian method of salvation by faith shines by its own light. It needs no vindication. It hardly needs elucidation, and would in certain cases as easily suffer from it as gain by it. It is just this: We are all "alienated from the life of God" by having had "our understanding darkened." We are all poisoned by the devil's lie, and can be healed and saved only by receiving God's Gospel truth. The Divine Spirit who inspired it strives to get us to attend to it, and opens our minds, as we do so, to understand and believe it. If we will not, if we will attend to anything and everything, yea, to the veriest and most contemptible gossip of the hour, rather than to the sublime, God-given, soul-saving truth, then we remain steeped and sweltering in the serpent's venom, till we drop into the jaws of the second death. But if, on the other hand, we surrender ourselves to the striving Spirit and believe the Gospel, that message of gladsome news, assuring us of a propitiatory righteousness provided for us, and of a present pardon and welcome free to us from a loving and well-pleased God; and that not a sin we ever did now stands as an impassable barrier between us and our Father, God; that only unbelief stands between, and even that as a subjective barrier merely, from the nature of the case, and not as an unexpiated or inexpressible sin, Christ having atoned for that sin as truly and fully as for all the rest; that moment the wild weltering chaos of terror, or self-righteous effort, or the volcanic eruptions of tyrannic sin begin, under the dove-like hovering of the Divine Spirit, and the full-orbed smile of the Sun of righteousness, to subside into a great calm, and soon the fruits of the Spirit begin to wave.

over it, bright and beautiful in its measure like a garden of the Lord. Again to avail myself of some most apt illustrations by Dr. Morison, he thus deals with a much too common mistake:—

“There is really no fear of believing the right thing in a wrong way.

“There is very great danger of turning the attention of the mind *to the wrong thing*. Or if the object contemplated be the right thing in the main, there is yet considerable danger of carrying to it and spreading over it some wrong idea, through which it is distortingly apprehended.

“There is danger too of the mind becoming arrested on the superficialities of mere words,—though the words are in themselves the right words, and indeed the very best words imaginable. It is the thoughts behind the words, and the things behind the thoughts, that are the all-important realities. It is Christ Himself, or God in Christ, who is the Reality of realities. The mind must go to Him. It must never rest on any stepping-stone that keeps it out of sight of Him.

“There is also danger of men looking *to* their act of faith, instead of looking *through it* to the Glorious Object. But if you look *to* the telescope instead of *through* it, you will never see the rings of Saturn or the satellites of Jupiter.

“Faith is *eating* as it were. ‘I am the living bread,’ says Jesus, ‘which came down from heaven; if any man *eat* of this bread he shall live for ever’ (John vi. 51). If the right bread be set before men when they are hungry, there is little danger of them getting no good from what they eat, *because they eat it in a wrong way*. If you were to see two men eating hungrily each a piece of bread; and if the one were immediately to sicken and die while the other was refreshed and invigorated; would you naturally suspect the manner of eating, and have no suspicion whatever in reference to the thing eaten? Would you naturally say,—*No doubt they both ate what was very good*

in itself; but unhappily the one ate and masticated his morsel in a very wrong way? Would you not rather suspect that the difference of result was to be attributed to the difference of what was eaten? Would you not suspect that, while in the one case the thing eaten was wholesome, in the other it was poisonous?

“Faith, again, is *looking* as it were. Suppose yourself in the midst of the camp of the dying Israelites. Two men are lying before you who have been bitten by the fiery flying serpents. Moses calls to them both to *look to the brazen serpent and be healed*. The one complies and turns round, and looks up and is instantly healed. The other thinks it an absurdity that a mortal wound can be healed by looking to a piece of brass, and he turns away his eyes and looks away at some other object, and expires. What is the reason of the difference in the two men’s condition? Both looked; and so far as the act of looking is concerned, they looked equally well. Why, then, did the one die while the other lived? *The one looked at the right object; the other did not.*

“Faith is *coming* as it were. It is *coming to Jesus*. There is no fear of coming to Him by a wrong road. If a man only get to the right point, it matters very little in all ordinary cases by what way he arrives. The great difficulty is in getting to the right object, not in getting to it by a right way” (*Saving Faith*, pp. 115–118).

II. Having thus defined Faith in its general aspects, and under that threefold point of view which regards it respectively as a verbal expression, as a mental act, and as a theological doctrine, let us now briefly consider it under the particular description which the sacred writer here gives of it. With special reference to the practical use he has already made, and is yet further to make of it, he describes it as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” We have here two things presented to our view—first, the sphere of faith, and next, its place and value within that sphere.

The Sphere of Faith is exhibited under a twofold aspect—first, in the view nearest to its subject, and in the forward line of his interests as “things hoped for;” and next, as widening out illimitably throughout that same realm of “the unseen.” The “things hoped for” lie in a line stretching from the believer forward into the future, involving such questions as these: “What of light or shade may this world have yet in store for me? What about the solemn experiences of my closing hours? What of heaven and its activities, of eternity and its unfoldings, of Jesus, of angels, of the redeemed, and of my relation to them all?” The “things not seen” embrace the general sphere of which the things hoped for are a cherished part; they may embrace other cherished objects not in the future, but in the past or the present, such as Jesus and His personal work from the cradle to the cross, the ministry of angels, yea, the Ever-living God as the infinite portion of our soul; and they may embrace anything unseen though of no personal interest to us, such as the life of an Israelitish king, or, as the apostle here adds, the historic record of the creation.

From Faith's sphere let us now turn to Faith's Power: this is twofold also, corresponding to the twofold aspect of the sphere.

First, it is “the substance of things hoped for.” This expression has been much debated. For all practical ends a few words will here suffice. There are only three renderings of the expression that are admissible—to wit, either *substance*, *confidence* (in later Greek), or *basis*. The last, though urged by many, is hardly supported by New Testament usage. The other two, *substance* or *confidence*, are in perfect accordance therewith. *Substance* is as literal a translation as could be of the original term. It means to *stand under*; and naturally denotes that which stands under any qualities, in which qualities inhere and find substratum or existence. Thus viewed, Faith is that in which things hoped for find substantiation considered as hoped for. Faith gives them reality and subsistence as

objects of hope, and is in that sense their substance. And so ancient interpreters, who, like the moderns, were greatly interested in the pregnant expression, understood its weighty import. For the other view, *confidence*, a great deal also may be said. The word does mean this (having acquired this meaning in the later Greek), and is so translated in the New Testament; and it was specially common in this sense at that very period. Thus viewed, the phrase will simply mean—"Faith is a confidence of things hoped for" (comp. ch. x. 35). The former shade of meaning, however, we prefer, as simpler and more profoundly suggestive. So far as the main sense is concerned the two meanings very much coalesce, so that it is of little moment to debate their respective claims.

To come now to the remaining expression—"Faith is the evidence of things not seen"—the idea it conveys is simpler still. Some understand by it conviction, meaning that faith is a conviction of the existence of things not seen. Others understand by it logical evidence as the basis of faith; but that is not the idea, which, indeed, is rather the converse, namely, that faith itself is the evidence of things unseen. The true shade of meaning is this—and it is in perfect harmony with the depth of suggestiveness that lies in the preceding expression:—Faith is the evidence of things not seen; not in the sense that it is a *conviction* grounded on logical evidence, or that it is some logical demonstration on which that conviction is based; but faith is itself spiritual evidence, is to itself demonstration of things not seen. It is so self-luminous, so linked to heaven, to the eternal, to the pure, the good, the true, that it seeks no other evidence than what flashes radiant from itself. Instead of seeking evidence it furnishes it, and thus, in Christ's little ones it removes mountains by which intellectual giants are crushed. The greatest of the Italian poets, the Milton of Italy, well brings out this idea.¹ He pictures himself at

¹ See Delitzsch *in loc*

Heaven Gate, where, at the instance of his Beatrice, he is examined by St. Peter as to his faith. The first question put to him is, What is faith? Turning to Beatrice, and receiving from her signs of encouragement, he replies in the words of this text; and when the apostle asks him to explain these weighty words, he gives entire satisfaction in his reply, in which, with reference to the celestial things hoped for, he says:—

“That all their being lies in faith alone,
Whereon high hope proceeds to base herself,
And so faith takes the place and rank of substance.

And it behoveth us from our belief
To draw conclusions without other sight;
And so Faith takes the place of argument.”

We conclude by urging on all the duty and privilege of simple, guileless, self-evidencing faith, and of postponing all subtle and hard questions till they stand illumined in the light of eternity. How finely does Cowper first describe the infidel Voltaire as one who

“With spirit, genius, eloquence supplied,
Lived long, wrote much, laughed heartily, and died;”

and then describe, in pointed contrast to him, the cottager plying in faith and duty her woman’s work at her own door:—

“Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true—
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew;
And in that charter reads with sparkling eyes
Her title to a mansion in the skies.
O happy peasant! O unhappy bard!
His the mere tinsel, hers the rich reward;
He praised, perhaps, for ages yet to come,
She never heard of half a mile from home;
He, lost in errors his vain heart prefers,
She, safe in the simplicity of hers.”



II.

THE TRUE TEMPLE OF FAME.

Having described faith as the spiritual faculty that realizes the unseen, the apostle next proceeds to illustrate it from the life. Of these life-examples he makes the general remark in verse 2, "For by it the elders obtained a good report." Who were these "elders?" What was their "good report?" and how did they "obtain" it?

I. There is no difficulty in determining who these elders are. There are four aspects under which this designation may be understood—namely, as one of age, of office, of history, and of character. First, we speak of elders in age, or years, in the sense of seniors; but clearly it is in no such sense that we are to understand the word here,—for the very first name that heads this illustrious roll is that of the protomartyr Abel, who was cut off in his youth, and the next is that of Enoch, who was translated in his early prime. Secondly, elders is a name of office. So was it in the synagogue, so is it in the Church, and so has it been in civil politics, in such names as senators, seigneurs, aldermen, and the like. This naturally arose from the fact that elderly men would be appointed to rule, on the principle that "days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom" (Job xxxii. 7). It is equally manifest that no such sense is to be discerned here, for the heroes of faith that follow belonged to any office, or to none. Thirdly, elders is a name of history, denoting ancestors, progenitors, men

of antiquity; elsewhere spoken of as "the ancients," "the fathers," "the men of old." This sense we are plainly to discern here; and no less plainly are we to discern, as associated with it, the fourth or remaining sense, that expressive of character, as when we speak of elders as patriarchal and venerable men,—for of such alone is this list composed, and of such alone could it be said that they "obtained a good report."

These elders, then, were not the seniors of their generation, nor ecclesiastical rulers, but the spiritual heroes of the ancient time. They are not to be limited to Abraham and the other patriarchal progenitors of the Jewish nation, though to them, as was meet, marked prominence is here given. They embrace the great and good of every age, from Abel, of the primeval time, down to the martyred prophets, whom time and space fail the apostle to name, except in groups at the end of his roll; while the general terms he there employs glance beyond the Old Testament period to the Maccabean heroes, who rank second to none as examples of heroic and triumphant faith.

II. These, then, were "the elders," and such as these. What, now, was the "good report" which they "obtained?" The answer is easy: it was the high mention and permanent record with which they were honoured in that most indelible of fame-scrolls, "the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever," and in the subsequent national annals, and in the universal national heart. Only think of this very chapter. It is artless in the extreme; an unpremeditated outflow, allusive rather than descriptive, made up of snatches and touches rather than sketches, of finger-pointings and darting eye-flashes rather than poems or celebrations to the heroes named; and yet what Tyrtæan strains can compare with this gust of divinely-inspired encomium? and what could be named with it as a passport to ever-enduring renown? We have here in faint but fiery outline a gallery of spiritual portraits rapidly sketched, but how life-like! A touch, a passing dash from the pencil of

inspiration, and there the venerable ancient stands full length before you, nay, seems to move on the heaving canvas, conjured up from the depths of the primeval time. Ingenuous souls, especially young men and maidens (for the young of both sexes are here in this list of honour), glowing, as you now feel, with the noblest aspirations of early and uncontaminated years, do you not long, above all things, at whatever cost, at whatever sacrifice, to be enrolled among this honoured and memorable band?

A great poet expends the resources of his genius in describing an imaginary temple of fame, with its gorgeous columns, and porticoes, and pendants, and roofs of fretted gold; into the various recesses of which temple he puts statesmen, warriors, philosophers, poets, all whom the world has been proud of, and says of the class last named—

“With eyes on fame for ever fixed they sing:
For fame they raise their voice and tune their string;
With time’s first birth began the heavenly lays,
And last eternal through the length of days.”

Behold in the chapter before us a true temple of fame. Its occupants, indeed, find no place in that other temple; and they would disdain to accept it now were they offered it on the terms above described. For it was not on fame at all that the heroes of this temple ever fixed their eyes; it was not for fame at all that they ever lifted their voice. That was a poor, ignoble, and selfish aim, which, to a man, they would have scorned to set before them. The spiritual heroes of this our temple fixed their eyes on God. They raised their voice for God. By virtue of a living and life-giving principle, of which your fame-hunter—as sure as he is the mere votary of fame—knows nothing, they lived in the Unseen, and made their lives sublime, and obtained, because they sought it not, imperishable renown. Like Solomon, who sought wisdom and not riches,

and for that very reason was rewarded with both, they sought faith and not fame, and got therewith such fame to crown their faith as never wreathed the brow of the most vaunted thunderbolt of war. "To all the glories of France"—such is the superscription that glances down on you as you approach the Palace of Versailles. That palace was reared by a monarch known as "great," a voluptuary, a relentless persecutor, an unscrupulous son of ambition, whose life was one long tyranny at home, and one long fraud and raid on neighbouring states. You enter its galleries, and the pictures that greet you on every side are endless battle scenes, from which you turn your sated eye to ask, "Is this fair world, then, an Aceldama? And does God clothe it year by year with beauty and verdure and fertility, and make His sun rise on it daily, that men may use it as shambles for mutual slaughter?" A sufficient answer to these questions may be read in the late Franco-Prussian War, in such a prostration of martial France as no great nation had ever received, in such military reverses as find no parallel in history, and in such a supreme act of humiliation as the genius of fiction could hardly have ventured anticipatively to portray when, in that same Versailles palace, in the very monument of Germany robbed and trampled on by France, the assembled powers of the Fatherland solemnly proclaimed that victorious Germany was now one and imperial. So perish by the sword they who take the sword! So ever may God "scatter the people who delight in war!" In contrast to all such lurid and spurious, and therefore ephemeral glories, behold these heroes of faith, shining undimmed down the ages in the galaxy of inspiration, and destined to shine in the celestial firmament "as the stars for ever and ever."

III. This brings us to our third and last inquiry. How came these elders or ancients to obtain this good report? The answer is in the two monosyllables that begin my text: "By it"—namely, faith. This rendering is not quite correct. Instead

of "By it," it should rather have stood, "In this." You may deem this an over-nicety; but it is not so, for each word is expressive. The word "this" is used by the apostle, and ought to have appeared in our version to give pointed emphasis to the idea that their faith was their fame, and that by no other avenue than faith could they have fought their way to renown. The other word, "in," is, if possible, still more expressive; for it denotes that in faith they lived as in their vital element; and that in this element alone it was that they fought out their good fight, and "obtained a good report." Both these shades of thought deserve and demand our profound and prayerful attention.

First, be it stamped into our mind with all the emphasis our apostle means, till the truth stands out in bold relief on the tablet of our spiritual consciousness, that by "THIS"—namely, faith—and only by this, can sinful man find favour with God, and true spiritual fame. By our own good works? Never! We are sinners. As such our works could only condemn us. On that level we are only on the glowing pavement of perdition, a volcanic crust that may break up at any moment, and leave us to drop into final woe. By faith, by faith we must soar above this treacherous element of personal merit to the solid and sunlit platform of gospel grace. With the hand of faith on the head of the God-given Lamb, the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, we must trust to Christ's deservings and not to our own, and accept pardon and the gift of a righteousness as a merciful boon out of the hand of a loving and well-pleased God. As by faith we enter through Christ, "the door," into salvation-ground; by this same faith we must "stand," by this same faith we must "run," by this we must "fight," by this we must "overcome" (2 Cor. i. 24; Heb. xii. 1; 1 Tim. vi. 12; 1 John v. 4). "In this conquer," was the precisely similar form of the inscription said to have been seen by Constantine over the luminous cross. By no other path

than faith in the Crucified can we attain to spiritual life; and nothing more than faith is needed to bear us on to the eternal crown.

Secondly, for this very reason, be it no less distinctly noted that it is "IN this," *i.e.* in faith, as in a vital and habitual element, that we are to wrestle on to this triumphant destiny. It is by no spasmodic act of faith, or any number of detached acts, but in an element of faith, in which the act of faith runs unto the "life of faith," and in which, as in our vital environment, we are to persevere unto the end, that we are to conquer our way to the eternal kingdoms. We are to live in faith as the fish lives in the water, as the eagle soars in the air. And to do this needs effort—stout, strenuous, and sustained. Let no man, especially let no young man, flatter himself that he will reach the "good report" and the eternal crown without conflict, without self-denial, without grim wrestle with the infernal powers, and with the internal traitors in our own camp in the shape of indwelling sin. "The fight of faith" is no holiday affair of mere manœuvring and reviewing. "The race set before us" is no piece of pleasurable excursioning or processioning. It is a thing of life and death earnestness; and all heaven is looking on. "He that endureth unto the end the same shall be saved." "Be thou faithful unto death, and thou shalt receive the crown of life."

Thus in these "ancients and honourables," in the best and highest sense, we see one feature in common, one family lineament distinctly recognizable in them all. Need I name it? It is faith. They are a family group; their common feature is faith, and the household they constitute is "the household of faith." Faith is the flesh-like covering, the radiant tint that lends such a living and nameless charm to the whole. All classes and ranks are here, from the shrinking woman in the retired walks of oriental life to the prominent epoch-making man, or the public and acting men of their time.

All dates are here, from that of Abel, the protomartyr, to that of later prophets slain "between the temple and the altar." All cases are here, afflictions, bereavements, persecutions, oppressions, losses, crosses, and all the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to. But amid all these varieties there is one light throughout that shines with serene and steady lustre; there is the one feature of faith that stands out strongly in them all. In faith they lived. In faith they died. Faith was the element that bore them up and floated them to glory. Faith was the most conspicuous thing about them, and, hence, here very fitly forms their escutcheon. "By faith, by faith"—such is the formula which introduces and heralds them one and all. "By faith" this one did this, "by faith" that other endured that. And so by virtue of their faith and its godlike fruits these "ancients have obtained a good report." Their names shall float triumphantly down the tide of time in the imperishable ark of inspiration, though that tide be strewn rough with the wreck of armaments and thrones, and they shall be held in lovingly cherished and everlasting remembrance when monumental columns and pyramids shall have crumbled into dust.





III.

CREATION.

Before proceeding to cite his "cloud of witnesses,"—the ancients who, by faith, found honourable mention in the most enduring of all rolls of fame,—the inspired writer conducts us as far back as we could go for an illustration of faith's function in relation to "things not seen," namely, to the Old Testament record of the work of Creation. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (ver. 3). We shall first inquire into the precise meaning of these words; next, show how Creation is "understood through faith;" then contrast the principles set forth in this verse with certain atheistic denials of Creation that have become strangely prevalent in these bewildered days; and finally indicate the testimony of our higher reason to Creation and the Creator.

I. The meaning of the verse is in the main perspicuous enough. It refers to Creation as one of "the things not seen" that we can know only by faith. It is a thing in the past, indeed, not in the future, but so much the better, for variety's sake, does this make it as an illustration; for faith has to do with past as well as future, embracing without limit the sphere of the unseen. Every day we live we are on the border line between two eternities; and when so much has been said, and is yet to be said, of the bright futurity set before the Christian, considering how many vital objects of his faith (for example,

the cross) lie in the unseen past, it was meet to begin at the beginning, and interlink the two eternities, and all intervenient time, as the appropriate sphere of Christian faith.

The allusion is to the inspired record of Creation, which is set forth as an object of faith. For the knowledge of this we are entirely dependent on faith. We were not there to see. "Where wast thou," exclaims the Creator himself, "when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare if thou hast understanding. Who laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job xxxviii. 4-7). Unless the Divine Architect had inspired one to inform us, we must have remained ignorant of the Creation doctrine in its distinctive completeness. It was not a thing for us to perceive; it was a thing "through faith to understand," or apprehend. Reason, indeed, in grappling with the problem of existence, if it only proceeded faithfully and logically, could not have stopped short of it; and yet, in point of fact, by its own unaided efforts it never attained to it. "The determinations of all the heathen on this point," says Valcknaer, "may be reduced to two heads. They thought either that the universe had existed from eternity, or that, at least, rude matter had eternally existed, which some god shaped to order." But in this, as in other cases, what, in point of fact, reason had never by her own unaided efforts attained, when once made known to her and explained she at once and wholly approves. Thenceforth it has been the settled doctrine of every religious mind. It is a sublime commonplace in Scripture, and perpetually recurs in poetic delineations and in prophetic appeals. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." It was not a truth that could die out either in the Jewish or the Christian mind. In Maccabees vii. 28, 29, the noble Jewish

mother, in consoling her sons when they were in the fiery tortures of martyrdom, "stirring up her womanish thoughts with a manly stomach" (ver. 21), said to the one that still survived: "I beseech thee, my son, look upon the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, and consider that God made them of things that were not; and so was mankind made likewise. Fear not this tormenter, but, being worthy of thy brethren, take thy death, that I may receive thee again in mercy with thy brethren." In contrast with this old world piety, what a descent has been made to large segments of modern atheistic thought. For, under the influence of such till lately unheard-of monsters as these of "nihilism," "positivism," "agnosticism," this high truth many in these times "*willingly* are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old" (2 Peter iii. 5).

By "the worlds" (a word that literally means the ages) we are to understand the entire structure of the material universe. Plurality of worlds, in some sense, must have been in the writer's mind when he expressed himself thus; but of course in no sense anticipatory of the revelations of modern science; nor is it of the least consequence to call up in this connection the notions on this subject that were current among the Jews. It is enough to understand him as affirming that the universe in all its complexity was created and adjusted by the fiat of the Almighty. Adjusted, we say, or fitted part to part, for such is the meaning of the original term appropriately rendered "framed;" and by the Almighty's fiat, we further say, for thus clearly we are to understand "the word of God," and not in the personal sense of the Logos, however true it may be that the Divine Jesus is Creator. The allusion manifestly is to the oft-recurrent phrase in the first of Genesis, "And God said," and to the numberless instances in Scripture in which God is declared to have called into being and to have framed all worlds by the word of His power.

It only remains to explain briefly the closing expression, "so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." The first idea irresistibly conveyed by these words is a direct negation of the godless view so paraded in these times, that Creation proper is not to be thought of, no, nor even a Divine Creator, such transcendentalism being not only not proven or known, but utterly unknowable, altogether "inscrutable." We are here distinctly taught the expressly opposite doctrine, namely, that so far from things seen being the only thing clear in regard to the universe, as revealing successions of evolutionary processes that constitute the all of Creation doctrine that we either need to know, or ever can know, it is precisely in the unseen behind them that the whole Creation truth lies.

There is another and yet grander truth latent in these words that demands consideration. Creation out of nothing is by no means the only thing here taught. The expression under review opens up to us the entire sphere of "things not seen" that pertain to the Divinity. Natural phenomena reveal nothing, within the mere domain of the phenomenal, that unfolds the secret of their origin. We must transcend the region of the phenomenal and pass to that of the noumenal—from the sphere of sense to that of spirit and the higher reason—before we can as much as tread the threshold of the real science or true ideal of Creation. We must pass entirely from the chain of endless successions, of causes and effects, to the Great First Cause, Himself Uncaused, and find in His attributes of absolute power and Godhead the first alphabet of the Creation's lesson. Strikingly elucidatory of this is the following passage in Rom. i. 19-21: "Because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead: so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him

not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." We quote so much because the latter part, no less than what precedes, has its significance and its applicability to the chaotic features of these times. "That which is known of God" (for such is the literal rendering) "is manifest in them;" how could it otherwise be, for "God hath showed it unto them" too conspicuously to be missed, unless they wink hard enough to extinguish even the zenith sun in the heavens. "For" (I transpose the words a little to make the meaning more plain) "the invisible things of Him, even His eternal power and Godhead, have, ever since the Creation of the world, been clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; so that they are without excuse;" for God they already knew, yet denied Him the glory and the grateful homage due to His august name; and thus, falling back on their own imaginations, they interwarped themselves therein, as in spiritual ceremonies, and more and more blinding and entangling themselves in their own vaunted wisdom, they argued and cultured themselves into magnificent fools.

What they thus originally knew of God, and could not but know, but refused to "retain in their knowledge," they owed to a double contact with God; first, in their conscience and higher reason, as creatures stamped in the Divine image, and secondly, in the ever present and palpitating tokens of the loving, living, and life-giving God, that constantly spoke to them in the works of Nature and Providence; and especially in the revolution of the seasons, "dropping fatness" in every land, distilling mercy on thankless souls, and "filling them with food and gladness," while they in return filled their lives with the returns of forgetfulness, denial, or open defiance. "These as they change, Almighty Father, these are but the varied God. The rolling year is full of Thee." In the yet finer words of the psalmist, "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness."

II. We are next to see how Creation is a thing to be "understood" or apprehended by us "by faith." This will not take us long. It was not a process they could perceive, for they were not there to see; it was a thing to "apprehend" by coming to know and believe an authentic record of it divinely given. This they had in the Mosaic account of the Creation; and how to use this authoritative record the sacred writer here finely exemplifies. Instead of lingering over details, he seizes its salient and vital points—Creation proper at the divine fiat, and from no pre-existent matter; and then divine adjustment and ordination, God being immanent and ever operating in all His works, as contrasted with mere brute matter thought to be endowed, nobody can tell how, "with the promise and the potency of all life."

What Moses thus reveals as the authentic record of Creation reappears in all its essential features, expressly or allusively, in every page of the Bible. Fundamentally viewed the doctrine of God the Creator is vital to all religion, natural or revealed. And viewing the Mosaic cosmogony in detail, its gradational harmonies and marked affinities with science and all other truth, have been the marvel and the admiration of every candid discerner. Indeed, take the Mosaic account of Creation apart from its scaffolding of days, and one or two incidents more, and what real difficulty remains? while even these dwindle into greater insignificance the longer they are considered. To whatever extent difficulties remain to any, let them be held in abeyance, for the liquidating influence of time and study is ever more reducing them to a dissolving view.

As an illustration of the faith principle, the case is self-luminous. Creation, by us "unseen," we on God's Word believe. Faith duly considered is here its own evidence. Let the same faith be exercised in all the "unseen things" that pertain to the new "creation in Christ Jesus unto good works" now, and to the grandeurs "not seen as yet" of the final creation hereafter; as, "according to his promise, we look for

new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." These last things, which held wrapped up in them the coming King, and "the great recompense of reward," were just what the Palestinian Christians, under their sore trial, were most apt to forget. The remedy was faith, and the moral was plain. We believe the divine record of the first Creation; on the same ground let us believe the last. Christ himself drank ardour from "the joy that was set before him" (Heb. xii. 2); in this, as in everything else, let us keep "looking unto" and imitating Jesus, the "author and finisher of our faith." "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

III. Let us indicate a little further (for we have already to some extent done so) the point-blank contradiction which the inspired writer here, and the Bible throughout, from the opening statements of Moses down through all the prophets, give to all doctrines of natural development that deny, ignore, or otherwise dispense with a creating God. The Bible stands out in direct antagonism, for good reasons already given, to that doctrine of evolution *in its agnostic form*, which in these days so boldly lifts up its horn, and in some quarters seems to have become so insanely fashionable. The issue admits of no dubiety whatever. Those evolutionists delight to fasten on the pictorial or dramatic details of the Mosaic account of the Creation. This is mere diversion. The real and only irreconcilable antagonism lies between the doctrine here and throughout Scripture taught and reiterated with pointed emphasis, that God by His creative fiat called all things into being, and framed them into harmonious order, and the atheistic doctrine that not only are all things merely evolved from pre-existing forms, go back as far as we may, but that we are under no call of reason or aught else to go further back than this; nay, that reason and science forbid us to do so, for the existence of God is neither known nor proved, yea, is a thing which it transcends our faculties to know.

The great German naturalist and evolutionist, Haeckel, says that the clearest name for his work (*Schöpfungsgeschichte*) would be *The Non-miraculous History of the Creation*. In his larger work (*Generelle Morphologie*) he heads a chapter thus: "Purposelessness, or Dysteleology"—meaning by that latter technical term, as by the former, the entire absence of design, which, with such connected ideas as "beneficence of the Creator," "moral order of the universe," and the like, he simply ridicules. "It no longer occurs to physicists," he says, "to look for design or a Creator; all being under inexorable law." We hope better things of many physicists, else woe worth the day! He sees in no species of plant or animal "the embodied thought of a personal Creator," but the mere process, for the time, "of development according to eternal, immutable laws." But what and whence are his "laws"? How came he by his "eternal"? How came he by his "immutable"? With infinite absurdity, which only a philosopher could achieve, he says, "The universe is unlimited and immeasurable in both space and time. It is eternal, and it is infinite. Nor can we imagine a beginning or end to the uninterrupted and eternal motion in which all particles of the universe are always engaged;" that is, the universe, made up of particles, and therefore finite and conditioned, and began to be, is "eternal," is "infinite," is self-existent! It means motion which never began to move, revolution which never began to revolve, matter everywhere limited, and yet without a limit!

These two doctrines of agnostic evolution and Scriptural Creation agree together like fire and water. One or the other must go to the wall, in what emphatically must prove a real "struggle for existence." If the former prevail, then, not the Bible only, but all religion, yea and reason, go down; and morality in any consistent and persistent form to be rationally hoped for,—that, too, will inevitably follow them into the gulf. David Hume has long laid down on the philosophical and

moral chart what that gulf is, and how it is to be reached. It is the logical goal of the sensuous philosophy. But this is the very philosophy avowed and gloried in by the school of thought to which we refer. The ship "Sensuous" has but one destination—Hume's Gulf!

And yet, how that philosophy so called is constantly contradicting itself. "No man," says Herbert Spencer, "ever saw a special creation," or any proof of one; and yet, by their own confession, no man ever saw an evolution, or any proof of one!

These remarks of course apply only to agnostic evolutionists. We are not forgetful that there are also Theistic and Christian evolutionists. How far they are consistent in this position depends on the evolutionary lengths to which they are prepared to go. This is a question we will not here debate. Certainly, if they accept evolution all round (and it is not easy, if you accept its *main* assumptions, to assign a limit where to stop short), and thus indiscriminately include matter, spirit, life, the lower creatures, man, mind, and morals, all alike in the process, and say that whatever of religion and morality may turn up has been evolved under no higher impulse than "natural selection" might prompt, as mere utilitarian expediences in the incessant "struggle for existence," then it is hard to see what righteous place the term "Christian" can have in such a connection. For our part, though prepared gratefully to accept whatever scientific contribution evolution has to offer us, we cannot, for any cause yet shown, regard it in its wholesale form as aught better than assumption or mere theory, confessedly as yet, its own promoters being witness, devoid of any tangible proof, and obnoxious to scientific objections (to name nothing higher) that appear to be altogether insurmountable.

We are under no alarm whatever as respects the first of Genesis, seeing that questions of interpretation, and also of the details of inspiration, are always open to revision; nor can we sufficiently admire the majesty and simplicity of that Creation

record, and its expansion in the 104th Psalm, so infinitely superior to all cosmogonies, so true in its main gradational details, and thus so admirably illustrative of the fundamental affinities of all truth.

IV. It only remains that we here briefly indicate the testimony of reason to Creation, and to a great First Cause, Himself uncaused. We say reason, nothing faltering merely because there exist avowed atheists, for these are but exceptions that prove the rule, and there will ever and anon be found men, especially philosophers, who would wink the zenith sun into darkness, and even deny their own existence. But they either make no way, or soon develop their native fruits. Atheism could no further go than when, under the frenzy of the French Revolution, men openly defied the Supreme, and wrote over the portals of their cemeteries, "Death is an eternal sleep;" and yet, even before that frenzy had culminated, the dictator Robespierre persuaded the Convention to "decree" (*décriter*, so they phrased it) "the existence of the Supreme Being," and also "that prime consoler" (*ce principe consolateur*), "the immortality of the soul." All this was solemnly and ostentatiously proclaimed at the so-called "Feast of the Supreme," which Carlyle pronounces "the shabbiest page of human annals," and at which the dictator, dressed and "frizzled and powdered to perfection," delivered what the same historian calls "the scraggiest prophetic discourse ever uttered by man" (*Fr. Rev.* part iii. book vi. ch. iv.). Such lengths will atheism go to in human society, where allowed time and scope. Such fruits it has developed, and may develop again. Human nature, however cruelly experimented upon, never fails; for decree what men may, it is ushered into the world fresh with every new-born child, and in one form or other "cries out for God, for the living God." "Were there not a God," said a French sage, "it would be necessary to invent him" (*S'il n'y avait pas un Dieu, il faudrait l'inventer*). Even Voltaire weds this sentiment

to verse.¹ Human nature, from its entire trifoliant aspect of thinking, feeling, and willing, in its natural expanse of branch and blossom, looks with open face to God.

Restricting attention to the thinking, or intellectual point of view, we are driven to Theism in direct answer to the irrepressible demand of the intelligence for a satisfactory solution of the problem of being. This demand is the more significant that it is not called for by any of the current practical requirements of life. It is a purely intellectual prompting of our higher reason. Starting with our own existence, we find it finite and conditioned, with no reason in itself for its own being. Passing to surrounding beings and things related to us, we find them the same; not one of them can account for itself, and the higher any one is in the scale it is only the more conditioned and restricted. Many being content simply to fulfil the practical conditions of life without further concern on the intellectual side, it is only in philosophic moods, or times, that the problem of being excites inquiry. When it comes to do so in earnest, it is speedily seen that the solution must be sought outside of ourselves, and of all other restricted and transitory existences around us. To say that all are finite and conditioned, is to say that all are dependent. But on whom? or on what? That is the problem.

To this there are only two answers possible: either that of an eternal series of infinite causes, or that of an eternal and self-existent First Cause.

The eternal series looks best at the first blush, but on closer inspection and further handling it eludes our grasp, and slips away like a rope twisted out of the rainbow. It is clearly a hand-to-mouth argument. Then it is mere assertion at best; for how far does real knowledge carry us back along that assumed eternal line? Further, if we test the meaning of these

¹ Si Dieu n'existoit pas, il faudroit l'inventer,
Que le sage annonce et que les grands le craignent.

finite causes, we find the word "cause" melting away in our hands into a mere stream of antecedents and consequents; and if the word "force"—that "ultimate of ultimates," according to Herbert Spencer—be brought in to harden them anew into consistency, we find that it is but a new label for the same thing. If it is anything more, it belongs to the other and truer solution. Still further, we find that the eternal series occupies, or rather usurps, logical ground, and that on a very vulgar level, by way of evasive expedient to cover our ignorance. Finally, and decisively, even as a logical theory it is intrinsically absurd; for trace the series back till thought is weary, and begin again and rest again, and repeat the process millions of times, and millions more, and evermore, that far anterior link is in principle the same as the one next to us, and not a whit more helpful to solve the problem of being. Hence the absurdity charged upon the eternal series notion, that it supposes a cause prior to the first cause. This is rebutted by the rejoinder, and often in the tone of indignant rebuke, that no such charge is relevant, seeing that the series is declared to be eternal, and therefore precludes all first. But this is a mere flourish of the proverbial broom to sweep back the Atlantic. Be it that, in form, the charge is not correctly put, it is still in substance valid. The very notion is unthinkable, yea, is positively self-contradictory;

"——— since every link
Of that long-chained succession is so frail,
Can every part depend, and not the whole?"

As certainly as the axiom, that whatever begins to be must have a cause, and as each link in the series begins to be, however far back may be its place, the series itself must have begun to be, and can in no other manner be conceived of; for how can a succession of finite causes be eternal any more than a succession of days, or other aliquot parts of time could be multiplied into an eternity?

Much stress is laid on the inherent virtues of the molecule. Everything lies there—like the flower in the bud, like the chick in the shell. And the whole explanation lies there—could we only see how! That ultimate molecule is the last refuge for the destitute. But if it indeed explains all, it will explain a great deal too much for our God-ignoring evolutionists; for it will then rub shoulders very closely with the great doctrine of inspired men, that “God works all in all.” This aspect of the case was well put long ago by the author of *The Night Thoughts*:—

“Has matter innate motion? Then each atom
Asserting its indisputable right
To dance, would form an universe of dust.
Has matter none? Then whence these glorious forms,
And boundless flight, from shapeless and reposed?
Has matter more than motion? Has it thought,
Judgment, and genius? Is it deeply learned
In mathematics? Has it framed such laws
Which, but to guess, a Newton made immortal?
If art, to form; and counsel, to conduct;
And that with greater far than human skill,
Resides not in each block;—a Godhead reigns.
And, if a God there is, that God how great?”

Dismissing this first solution, then, it only remains that we accept the other, that of an eternal, intelligent, self-existent First Cause. Whatever difficulties this may present to our limited faculties, it involves no contradiction or inconsistency. It solves the entire problem, otherwise utterly insoluble. It accounts for mind, otherwise unaccountable, by the pre-existence of an Infinite Mind, and for what we call physical causes by a great First Cause. We are driven to it by the necessary laws of human thought, by the dictates of pure reasoning; and thus simply, under the department of Thinking, seeking to solve the problem of being, we are borne irresistibly into the belief of an Infinite God.

We close with two testimonies from the two mightiest magnates of science that ever adorned a period. Bacon, the sage and restorer of modern science, utters the oft-cited declaration, "I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind; and, therefore, God never wrought miracles to convince atheism, because his ordinary works convince it" (*Essay XVI.*). Newton, the greatest conqueror in the domain of science the world has ever seen, appropriately crowns and consecrates the work in which he expounds his discoveries, by the following concluding observations (quoted by Canon Birks, in *The Scripture Doctrine of Creation*, pp. 171-173):—

"This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being. And if the fixed stars are the centres of other like systems, these, being formed by the like wise counsel, must all be subject to the dominion of One; especially since the light of the fixed stars and sun is of the same nature, and passes from one into all the systems.

"This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all. The Supreme God is the Being eternal, infinite, absolutely perfect; but a Being, however perfect, without dominion, cannot be said to be Lord God. It is the dominion of a Spiritual Being which constitutes a God; a true, supreme, or imaginary dominion makes a true, supreme, or imaginary God. From His true dominion it follows that the true God is a living, intelligent, powerful Being; and from His other perfections, that He is Supreme or Most Perfect. He is Eternal and Infinite, Omniscient and Omnipotent; that is, His duration is from eternity to eternity, His presence from infinity to infinity; He governs all things, and knows all things that are or can be done. . . . We know Him only by His most wise and excellent contrivances of things, and final causes; we

admire Him for His perfections; but we reverence and adore Him on account of His dominion. For we adore Him as His servants; and a God without dominion, providence, and final causes, is nothing else but Fate and Nature. Blind, metaphysical necessity, which is certainly the same always and everywhere, could produce no variety of things. All that diversity of natural things which we find, suited to different places and times, could come from nothing but the ideas and will of a Being existing necessarily. By way of allegory, God is said to see, to speak, to laugh, to love, to hate, to desire, to give, to receive, to rejoice, to be angry, to work, to build. For our notions of God are taken from the ways of mankind by a certain similitude, which, though not perfect, has however some likeness. And thus much concerning God, to discourse of whom from the appearances of things does certainly belong to Natural Philosophy."





IV.

ABEL—IMPORT OF SACRIFICE.

Definition and other preliminary generalities now despatched, the inspired writer proceeds to introduce in detail his life-illustrations of faith. The fact that he begins with the primeval family, and yet makes no mention of Adam, has started not unnatural but very needless conjecture. Some find in it a proof that Adam is among the lost; others see in it a brand on Adam as the first transgressor. Both views are equally foolish. The omission of Adam is amply explained by the obvious fact that our apostle limits his illustrative examples to those recorded in the Old Testament, and that of Adam and Eve no facts to the purpose are given, though there is every ground to assume that they believed the primeval Gospel and were saved. Of their first two sons, however, incidents more to the purpose are recorded; and with them, accordingly, the inspired writer begins. The story of Cain and Abel is distant in date, but transcendent in interest. If brief, the more loudly does it call for elucidation. We shall have most to say of that one of the two brothers whose history is the shortest; for if Abel's be the briefer memorial of the two, it is also the more brilliant and evangelically instructive.

Carry yourselves back then to that well-head of all human history. As an explorer, rowing up the Nile, gets at length among the mountains, where cataracts and other obstacles bar further ascent, and leave him (or not so long since did) simply

to imagine its source in some far off latitude where human foot may have never trod; even so, if we ascend the tide of human history, it narrows and breaks, and at last bars our way till we can only imagine its source in some hoary epoch beyond. But here, in very deed, we find ourselves at the source. As if at that furthest attainable point we had been transported at a bound over the intervening prehistoric haze of mystery and fable, we find ourselves let down at the very well-head of humanity and of history, with the sun of eternal truth shining cloudless overhead. Around us, partially illumined, is the primeval home of man. The mildew of sin has fallen upon it, but it is lovely still. Like a golden eventide, it has lingering hues of beauty that seem loath to depart; but imperceptibly they pale and disappear under the raven wing of night. It is like the first day of the young and lovely dead, as sung by the poet—

“So coldly sweet, so deadly fair,
We start, for soul is wanting there.”

And yet, thanks to redeeming love, soul is not wanting there. That young fallen world has begun to throb with the pulsations of a new life. The serpent has stung it to the vitals, but the balm of Heaven's mercy is already on the wound. The poison-breath of the destroyer has blown out the taper of the spiritual life which God had just kindled in Eden; but God, with the breath of heavenly mercy, has blown it into life again, and though it takes to but very slowly, the revivifying process has begun, and the result is sure. Eden has already withered, and the cherubic falchion sweeps the gateway; but a new and lovelier Eden is in the future, with its tree of life and river of life, but with no reappearing serpent, and with “no more curse.” Doom has thundered over guilty man, but it has been followed by the silvern accents of the joyful sound. Sin has entered into the world, and is soon, alas! to abound; but grace has also

entered, and is destined to superabound, and to overrule the dire convulsion for ends of highest good.

Such is the kind of stage on which the two primeval brothers, Cain and Abel, Earth's first and second born, appear and act their several and contrastive parts. Their memorial is singularly rich and significant—especially in the critical incidents of their career on which our apostle here comments. In a mine so precious we propose to take some time and to dig with care. We will consider the narrative in its *morally historical*, its *doctrinal*, and its *practical* bearings; the first of which will occupy us now.

Let us then contemplate the story of Cain and Abel from what we have termed the *morally historical* point of view. By this we mean that there are certain great facts relating to the moral condition of our fallen world, and the promulgation of the Gospel in it, on which that narrative throws a flood of intense historical light. We shall mention three facts of special interest and weight.

I. It throws a flood of lurid light on the *fearfully rapid progress* in our lapsed world of *sin, misery, and death*. The first human birth in this world was that of a murderer!—the second was his victim! So rank and prurient is the growth of evil! So soon did sin conceive and bring forth death! So tremendous is its gravitation, downward and ever down! A heathen poet could say, "Easy is the descent to perdition." A higher than he has said, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way." Think of this ye who have light thoughts of sin and hard thoughts of God. Young man, if sin smiles on you like a siren, promptly exclaim, The more curse be upon it! Had the above awful fact not been recorded; had oblivion thrown a veil of reserve over the first millennium or two of the history of fallen man; had the primeval record been a mere series of genealogical stepping-stones, standing out like mountain tops over wide valleys of mist in which nameless generations had lived and

died, supervening on each other like wave upon wave, what would Christian moralists have probably inferred as to the rate of degeneracy in our fallen world? Most likely this, that it would be slow and gradual. They would have unanimously settled down in the apparently rational conclusion, that a holy fragrance from paradise, like the odour that exhales from the withered rose, would long continue to float on the moral atmosphere of man; that the young world, with all its sins, would still wear very lovely features, such as infancy under the shield of innocence carries with it almost unscathed into pining sickness and death; that at any rate violence would be unknown, and human life held sacred, and peace assert such sway as to keep the more volcanic feelings under, and bind the primeval generations into something yet resembling one large brotherhood of love. And yet how egregious would have been our mistake! Sin ruined the first man, and prompted the second man to slay the third man! The very first page in the history of fallen man is a blood-stained page; the very first death it records is a violent death; that violent deed was a murder; that murder was a martyrdom; and what the perpetrator was left to contemplate after the deed was done were the mangled remains of a young and unoffending brother! After this it can hardly surprise us to read: "The earth was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt: for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Gen. vi. 11, 12).

What an insight have we here into the exceeding sinfulness of sin! Hither and contemplate this victim stretched out in paleness and gore on the earth's young bosom, ye sons and daughters of carnal mirth; ye who feel sin to be "sweet in your mouth, who roll it under your tongue;" ye who mutter impious discontent at the strictness of God's law, and at the faintest suspicion of an actual hell. Read here on the surface the true character of sin; and read under the surface the need for a

propitiation. Read also in this story of the primeval brothers a sweeping nullification of those Utopian dreams of a golden age in the far past, to which distance lends enchantment, on which rationalistic moralists and sceptics so often descant. Both classes, under shallow views of the deadly turpitude of sin, fall into mistakes on the *moral* condition of man, quite as flagrant as those which many of our anthropologic philosophers have fallen into as respects his *physical* condition, when they speak of the simplicity and longevity of savage life as contrasting favourably with the refined degeneracy of civilized life—forgetting, or not knowing, that the ochred skin of the savage, his dependence on hunting, his constant animal diet in tropical climes, his precarious supply, and consequent irregular habits, with many other infractions of the organic laws which regulate health, induce cutaneous and other diseases (particularly small-pox), which often almost exterminate whole tribes; while, on the other hand, in consequence of the advancing science and humane institutions of civilized countries, the average duration of human life, as the bills of mortality prove, has long been somewhat on the increase; and the ameliorating process would be much more rapid, were those luxurious vices which are the rank weeds that usurp the rich soil of our civilization to be rooted up and put away in obedience to the living and life-giving Gospel. As Redemption adapts itself to the same root-principles of moral government as those under which took place the Fall, that rapidity of ruin illustrates the rapidity of the remedial process in those happier coming times when nations shall be born in a day.

II. This narrative of Cain and Abel sheds important light on the *universalities* of the faith, for every aspect of this primeval dispensation shows that the Gospel and Gospel institutions were given at first on a scale and with a destination commensurate with our fallen race. Had generations passed away before the first intimation of the Gospel had been given, that would indeed

have been a stumbling fact; but the one conspicuous fact after the Fall is just this, that the curse was directly followed by the blessing, the bane by the antidote. No time was lost in sweetening with the Gospel, and with Gospel institutions and symbols, the poisoned springs of the human race, that these might descend as spiritual sanatives to all generations. These primeval Gospel institutions, including, as we hope to show directly, the rite of animal sacrifice, were never repealed. On the contrary, they were, in all their universality of aspect and destination, periodically renewed and enlarged as circumstances required. Thus was it after the flood, when the Gospel was made a second time, in its immediate influence, co-extensive with the human race—that terrible catastrophe being in fact but a baptismal and purgatorial means to accomplish that end, and give mankind a second chance to take warning from their doleful past, and be careful henceforth to “walk in the light of the Lord.” This solemn lesson they soon, too soon, set at naught. But God, in wisdom and mercy, had resolved and pledged Himself never again to visit the earth with a flood. Hence the complications of heathen darkness that have ever since perplexed the course of divine mercy in this fallen world. But that course has never once intermitted, or deviated from its aim, namely to “bring salvation to all men,” and to “command all men everywhere to repent.” For this end, when Gospel light was again glimmering in its socket, Abraham was called, and means taken, by the segregation of a consecrated people, to secure from extinction the lively oracles of God, till “the Desire of all nations” should be revealed, the Great Sacrifice accomplished, and all things ripe and ready for reinaugurating a world-embracing dispensation, which should carry the Gospel and Gospel triumphs to the ends of the earth. Meanwhile, be it never overlooked, that those repeated renewals of Gospel grace never abrogated or withdrew any Gospel influence previously given, or continuously current, but were simple additions

thereto. These influences, as the case of Cain and Abel shows, have been operative from the very day of the Fall. There have been Gospel, in word and symbol, priest, prophet, and providential methods, for the advancement of the plan of mercy, ever since the world began.

III. A third point of great interest and importance, on which the narrative of the primeval brothers sheds a flood of historical light, is the complex and much-debated question as to the *Import* and *Origin* of Sacrifice.

To the first-recorded sacrifice all parties in this question concede special significance. With what eager interest would the man of letters contemplate the first rude alphabetic sign that was ever traced in our world, as he tried to dilate his soul towards the stupendous conception of those voluminous currents of thought and feeling of which alphabetic signs are now the daily channel and vehicle! With what eager interest would the traveller contemplate the first footmark of Columbus, had it escaped the obliterating waters, on the sandy beach of that New World which is now the nursery of mighty nations, and the scene of world-wide enterprises, that are imprinting their own record on every shore! But what are phenomena like these, compared with that of animal sacrifice? Viewed simply as a practice, it far transcends them in point of antiquity and universality; while in its larger and loftier import, as the symbol of the Great Propitiation, it transcends them as far in calm sublimity of interest and magnitude of reach as the volume that reposes in the hollow of ocean's immeasurable cup transcends the froth-fragments that melt on its shore. Well, then, does it become us to draw near the first rude altar, and contemplate the interesting sight, as the oldest of humankind proceeds to open a sacrificial tide which is seen thousands of years after to crimson every land.

1. It may tend to brighten and widen our sphere of vision on this great theme if we begin with the *fact* and *import* of

animal sacrifice as a practice at one time or another universal in our world. And in setting out on this inquiry let us carry with us as a welcome torch put into our hands by the Divine Spirit,—that solemn and significant statement in Lev. xvii. 11, in which we have clearly presented to us the true *rationale* of the ancient system of sacrifice: "The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

This emphatic declaration teaches us the divine institution of sacrifice—"the blood have I given you upon the altar;" it teaches us the object of sacrifice—"to make an atonement for your souls;" and it teaches us the principle, or *rationale*, of the sacrificial rite—"the life of the flesh is in the blood," the shedding of which is thus the symbol of that life forfeited in consequence of the transfer of liability from the sinner to the sinner's substitute—so simple, transparent, and direct is the teaching of the Spirit!

The subject of sacrifice is thus linked with the vital doctrine of the propitiation. Calmly and candidly investigated, it will be seen to be a testimony to the Saviour's atonement, of a character awfully solemn, imposing, and splendid; inscribed in letters of blood, which no infidelity can obliterate, on every part of the habitable globe. If anything could lend corroboration to the direct Scripture proof that Christ's death was a strict and proper satisfaction for sin, it is the simple fact of sacrifice—a fact which stands in stubborn majesty in the way of all who reject the atonement, at once to demand and to defy explanation.

The first is briefly this: Sacrifice is an institution, or a practice—call it what you will—nearly as long as time, nearly as wide as the world. This needs no proof, not even illustration. Every one knows that with a few anomalous exceptions, which it was most reasonable to expect, sacrificial rites have everywhere and all along prevailed. The bloody institute may be

traced, like a scarlet thread, inwoven into the very texture of human history in all its length and breadth. This, be it observed, is a fact; and as such it belong to the enemies of the atonement-faith to explain it consistently as much as to its friends.

Now, be it distinctly noted that holy apostles proclaimed Christ's death as a sacrifice for human guilt; and when they went forth among the Gentiles and preached Christ crucified as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, did they reckon it needful to define and explain the word *sacrifice*, and such kindred terms as conveyed the ideas of *substitution*, *imputation*, *propitiation*, *expiation*? Were they careful to warn the heathen, as some of our modern theologians are zealous to do, not to attach to these terms the sacrificial sense in which they were always understood, but to accept them as mere metaphorical flourishes for the Saviour's disinterested life and violent death? Nothing of the kind. They did not formally explain these sacrificial terms, simply because, among Gentiles as well as among Jews, these terms were universally understood. They did not infuse into them a new meaning, for they meant to exhibit Christ's death as a sacrifice in the propitiatory sense which Jew and Gentile, amid many imperfections and variations, substantially concurred in attaching to the term—that of life forfeited and offered for life, to avert the judicial wrath of a justly offended God.

This simple fact is a death-blow to every form of antisatisfactionism, for the case stood thus:—the practice of animal sacrifice had all along been universal; and sacrificial terms in all languages had substantially the same import. Such was the state of things when, in the heart of the nations, in the centre of the dispensations, at the meeting of the ages, at the fulness of the times, when the crimson tide of sacrifice was flowing fully and freely in every land, the Cross of Calvary was upreared for the holy Lamb of God, on whom Jehovah made to meet the iniquities of us all, and who died as “the propitiation for

the sins of the whole world." Forth went the heralds of the Cross, and told all men everywhere that then, and once for all, at the end of the Jewish age, the Lord Jesus had appeared, "and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." What meaning would "sacrifice" and kindred terms, as thus applied to the death of Christ, convey to the minds of men? Evidently that meaning in the main, and that only, which men in general had been accustomed to attach to such terms. If sacrifices among Jews and Gentiles were propitiatory in their nature, and sacrificial terms propitiatory in their usual acceptation, then propitiatory, beyond all question, must Christ's sacrifice be; that is, it was a sacrifice not in name merely, but in deed and in truth.

That the general import of sacrifice throughout the world has been essentially propitiatory used to be stoutly contested, but that old ground taken by Dr. Priestly and others has long been abandoned, and the position taken instead that the Christian ideal of sacrifice is set forth as fundamentally antagonistic to that which had generally prevailed—a position, as we have already seen, wholly untenable.

As respects the Jews, the rabbis inform us that in the act of sacrificing they hold up the victim and exclaim, "Let this be my expiation!" And what this means one of these writers thus explains: "Wherever the expression 'Let me be another's expiation' is used, it is the same as if it had been said, 'Let me be put in his room that I may bear his guilt;' and this again is equivalent to saying, 'Let this act whereby I take on me his transgression obtain for him his pardon.'" Another Jewish writer says of sacrifice: "The offerer deserved that his blood should be poured out, and his body burned, for his sins; but God in His clemency accepted for him the victim as his vicarious substitute and expiation, whose blood was poured out in place of his blood, and its life given in lieu of his life."¹

¹ See Magee on the *Attonement*, v. i. p. 251.

Among the Gentiles we find essentially the same sacrificial ideal under whatever load of corruption. Nay, we find the same sacrificial rites—such as the imposition of hands, and sometimes the very formula used by the Jews, “Let this blood be instead of my blood, this life instead of my life!” A Roman poet represents a sacrificer as exclaiming, “Accept, I pray thee, heart for heart, nerve for nerve; this life we yield to thee instead of a better!” Were the earth’s surface one vast scroll, a testimony to *guilt* and to *expiation* might almost be said without a figure to be inscribed on very much of it in letters of sacrificial blood.

Ye who treat this verdict lightly, be persuaded seriously to bethink you that the world as a whole is against you. Earth has only to “disclose her sacrificial blood, and uncover her slain” victims, to overwhelm you with the multitudinous declaration, loud as the voice of many waters, that you have taken up with a shallow and dangerous delusion. Everywhere the blood of sacrifice “crieth from the ground.” Wherever “incense has soared, or victims bled;” wherever the blood of human sacrifice has stained the idol-altar or the grove; wherever the devotee has torn and tortured his body for the ransom of his soul; there the groans and death-throes of unnumbered myriads of victims, comprising oceans of blood often drawn from the loveliest of human kind, proclaim as with the voice of a thousand thunders: “All things must be purged by blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no remission!” How will ye confront all this at the last day? Will your feeble voice drown that universal testimony from without, backed by the irrepressible Amen of your aroused conscience from within? O flee for your life while the refuge is at hand! Come as an undone soul, come as you are, come now; and laying the hand of faith on the head of the Divine, divinely-provided, and divinely-accepted, Lamb, on whom the Lord hath caused to meet the iniquities of us all, you will find that sacrificial tide, rich,

exhaustless, and free, speaking peace to your troubled conscience, dropping like oil upon the angry waters of your tempest-tossed soul, displacing the tumult of doubts and fears by "a great calm," cleansing your spirit "from all sin," and supplying you with an all-prevailing plea at the throne of grace now, and at the throne of judgment hereafter.





V.

ABEL—ORIGIN OF SACRIFICE.

Having briefly examined the import of animal sacrifice, we now proceed to investigate its origin. We shall endeavour to prove that this was divine. We begin with one or two *presumptive considerations*.

One is, the proved adaptation of sacrificial rites to imprint and perpetuate on the human mind the ideas of *guilt, substitution, imputation, expiation*—ideas which lie at the very foundations of the Gospel. It has proved the most perfect system of symbolic instruction ever given to the world. Wherever missionaries find sacrificial rites among the heathen, they find their work mightily facilitated. The venerable Moffat, referring to tribes that had lost all trace of these sacrificial rites, compares the difficulty he encountered in conveying to them the fundamental truths of sin and salvation to that of attempting to grasp the face of a smooth mirror. Nay, the expedient has sometimes been resorted to in such cases, of drawing rude pictures of the altar and the bleeding victim, which was a virtual restoration so far of God's primeval and pictorial institute.

In all this we may already read the divine institution of sacrificial rites, to the first family, as a pictorial illustration of the primeval Gospel. But other and cumulative proof crowds in upon us. For one thing, a strong presumptive proof is to be found in the admirable fitness of sacrificial rites to convey and perpetuate the ideas of guilt, substitution, imputation, in fact

all that make up the vital doctrine of expiation. All history demonstrates, and all missionaries testify, that as an instrument or basis of evangelic instruction it is without a rival. This of itself significantly indicates that it was appointed by divine wisdom to foreshadow the great propitiation.

Another strong presumptive argument for the primeval institution of sacrifice is to be found in its high antiquity. If it be indeed an invention of man, where shall we look for the inventor? To this history has no reply. Suppose we take the world-wide practice of sacrifice as we find it—where, in any nation, shall we arrive at its origin? To modern history it is, of course, needless to refer.

We go back still farther in the hope of arriving at the fountain, but no! We find sacrificial rites as prevalent in the earlier as in the subsequent ages. We then turn to the very earliest monuments of antiquity, where the light of history glimmers in the keenest glance; but sacrificial rites are as familiar and universal as ever. Through the cloud that walls up the unrecorded past rivers of sacrificial blood are seen to flow in, in full volume, within the horizon of our view, from some unknown fountain in some earlier age, over which the shades of oblivion seem to have long settled down. If we walk the wide world round at that point of antiquity, we shall find ourselves as far from the origin of sacrifice as ever, stream after stream of sacrificial blood crossing the line that separates the known from the unknown past. Thus, in tracing the origin of sacrifice as practised in all nations, profane history cries out from first to last,—“It is not in me!” This is another presumptive argument for the divine origin of the rite, in the infant stage of the world’s history, and its subsequent transmission from age to age.

From these general aspects of the subject we now turn to the more positive proof to which they are intended to be preliminary, namely, *the intimations of Scripture* as to the original

institution of sacrifice. This at once rends the veil of primeval antiquity, and sheds inspired illumination on our interesting path. There, at a date long anterior to the very earliest of Gentile records we find the sacrificial system compacted into the Mosaic institute; and we find it there as the direct appointment of God. But do we find it there for the first time? No. The Hebrews are addressed as already familiar with sacrificial rites; and these are referred to as universal in the nations around.

From the Mosaic period, therefore, we go back to the patriarchal, and find that Job sacrificed, that Abraham sacrificed, that Noah sacrificed; but have we arrived yet at the origin and institution of the rite? No. In all these cases we find the stamp of the divine acceptance and sanction; but we find nothing like the positive and express words of institution. We find these sacrifices, with the distinctions between the clean and the unclean, as observances well known to men and pleasing to God; but we have not yet, even at the flood, arrived at the mysterious fountain of that sacrificial tide which has permeated every land, and crimsoned the page of the entire history of man.

From the patriarchal period, therefore, we go back to the antediluvian, and we find that Abel sacrificed; which carries the rite up to the very highest antiquity, to the family of Adam, to the spring-head of the human race; and thus it is proved to demonstration that sacrificial rites, however and by whomsoever originated, must have flowed from the fountain of our race down through the many diverging streams of the human population.

This is an important stage of our inquiry. It narrows the question as to the origin of sacrifice within a convenient compass. It precludes all theories about its probable origin here, or its invention there; and from the wide waste of antiquity, where reason might have for ever reeled and ranged, "in wandering mazes lost," it recalls, circumscribes, and concentrates our

attention to what is revealed, or to what may be legitimately inferred respecting the first family of man in connection with sacrifice.

Now there are a variety of significant intimations of the divine institution of sacrifice. First of all, it had God's sanction all along. The Levitical offerings were His own express and immediate appointment. He prescribed sacrifice to the friends of Job as the known and recognized mode of acceptable worship; while in the case of Abraham, of Noah, of Abel—in every recognized instance, in short, of sacrifice at that early period He expressed by special or miraculous tokens His gracious acceptance, and therefore sanction, of the rite. There is only one instance recorded of an offering being rejected in that early age. That instance is the offering of Cain; and when we examine into its peculiarities, as compared with other offerings, then we find the difference to be simply this: Cain's offering had no blood! Solemn and striking fact! Cain's was the only recorded primeval offering that was destitute of blood; and it was the only recorded primeval offering that was rejected by God. Could anything be more significant of the divine institution of sacrifice at that early epoch of the world's history, as an instructive symbol of the great propitiation?

Fellow-sinner, see how hopeless will be your case if, like Cain, you despise the "blood that cleanseth from all sin." The only safety of Abel was in the blood. The only safety of Israel in Egypt from the destroying angel was the sprinkled blood that spake peace from every lintel to every first-born within. The only safety of the high-priest in the Holy of Holies was in the sacrificial blood that he bore for himself and the people, and sprinkled seven times upon and before the mercy-seat. And your safety at the last day, when the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunken man, and be wrapped round, with terrific suddenness, in its last winding-sheet of flame, will be in the precious blood of the "Lamb slain from the founda-

tion of the world," as the only hiding-place for your guilty soul. Will ye venture to lie down another night with God's curse on your head, when the blood of the Great Sacrifice might be sprinkled on your heart?

Another Scripture intimation of the Divine institution of sacrifice is thought by many to be found in *the skins of animals with which God clothed our first parents*, and which have, with much probability, been regarded by evangelical expositors as the skins of victims slain in sacrifice. There is no proof that animal food was used till after the flood, and not a little to the contrary. (Compare Gen. i. 29 with Gen. ix. 3.) The only fact, then, that seems to remain to account for the death of these animals is sacrifice, which is thus hinted at as a gracious provision, in a variety of respects, to our first parents immediately after the fall.

But the crowning intimation, which appears to me to amount to a direct Scripture proof of the Divine institution of sacrifice immediately after the fall is to be found in our present subject, *the recorded offerings of Cain and Abel* in the 4th chapter of Genesis, as compared with the inspired commentary on it in this 11th chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. By comparing the two passages we learn—

1. That Abel "did well," and was accepted; Cain did "not do well," and was in consequence rejected. This naturally indicates that it is in the actual offerings presented, and not in the character or internal feelings of the offerers, that we are to look for the ground or reason on which God accepted the one and rejected the other. It stands out in the fore-front of the narrative, that God's dealings with the two brothers, on the occasion described, were in no respect grounded on any diversities they might exhibit to the eye of Omniscience in their previously acquired habits, characters, or emotional states: this would have been to anticipate and antedate the judgment of the great day; but simply on their different acts or procedure

on the occasion described; to which, and to which alone, the entire narrative relates.

2. This is farther confirmed by the gracious intimation God made to Cain, that though he had not done well he might yet do well; that, though his vicious offering had been rejected, he had only to present a better to be immediately accepted. This, however, proceeds on the assumption, which many disallow, that in the expression "sin lieth at the door" (Gen. iv. 7), we are to understand by "sin" a "sin-offering." We shall therefore state the view, but by no means press it. Assuming its correctness, it would intimate that God, in order to furnish Cain with every facility, points him to a lamb crouching at the very entrance into the consecrated place where their rude altar was erected, and which probably faced the cherubic glory that overarched the flaming gate of Eden. This is held to be the meaning of the expression, "Sin (that is, a sin-offering) lieth (or croucheth) at the door." The rendering in our version does seem somewhat tautological. The word rendered "sin" is the common term in the original for a *sin-offering*; while the word rendered "lieth" signifies *to crouch*, being the appropriate expression for the recumbent attitude of an animal stretched at rest on the ground. He thus mercifully intimates that if Cain would yet do well, by offering the right kind of sacrifice, he would yet, notwithstanding the previous sinful sacrifice, be graciously accepted. And to encourage him to the discharge of this duty he adds, "Unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him;" that is, thy younger brother, as before, shall look up to thee, and thou, as the first-born, shalt continue to have the pre-eminence. How Cain treated this advice the tragic narrative in the next verse sufficiently declares. If this view be correct it confirms our previous remark, that we must look to the actual offerings presented for the true reason why God accepted the one and rejected the other.

3. This is placed beyond all doubt by the express authority

of the inspired commentator in the verse before us. The force of the expression "by faith" must not be overlooked; we shall advert to it by and by. What we have now to observe is, that as an inspired explanation of the reason why Abel's offering was accepted and Cain's rejected, the entire pith of the statement centres in the words, "a more excellent sacrifice." The very occurrence of the word "more," clearly proves that the comparison, or contrast, hinged entirely on the description of the respective offerings. Of this the original is most pointedly significant. It is literally rendered by Wickliffe, "a much more sacrifice," a quaint, but most just and expressive translation of the original, which thus intimates that Abel's offering was, in its nature, "much more" of a sacrifice, while Cain's had nothing of the distinctive character of a sacrifice at all. Here, then, is the true reason why Abel's offering was accepted and Cain's rejected. Abel's offering was a sacrifice in the proper sense of the term; Cain's was not. Abel presented the blood of a victim slain, as a symbol of his death-deserving guilt and of the great propitiation; Cain presented no sacrificial blood, confessed no guilt, recognized no wrath as his rightful portion, and expressed no faith in the atoning efficacy of the Lamb slain (in provision, symbol, and in effect) from the foundation of the world. On the contrary, he presumptuously presented a mere deistical thank-offering, and rushed as a rash, reckless, and high-handed rebel, with a Pharisaic "God I thank thee" on his lips, and sin's fuel in his heart, into the presence of that God who "is a consuming fire." Hence the fire of acceptance fell on Abel's offering, and spared the offerer; and that it fell not on Cain, the offerer, any more than on his offering, was owing simply to this: God, in the boundless compassions of his heart, would rather see it on the sinner's sinless substitute than on the sinner himself. Hence the fiery bolt was, in amazing mercy to Cain, suspended in mid-heaven, that he might yet repent, "do well," and be graciously accepted. So evident it is that "judgment is

God's strange act, and mercy his delight," that "He willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

4. We are now prepared, in the fourth and last place, to put the copestone upon our argument by remarking that the inspired writer of this epistle to the Hebrews expressly affirms as much when he says that it was by *faith*—not by conjecture, not by reason, not by accident, but by *faith*, that is, by belief—that Abel was led to offer unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. Our argument would have been complete without this declaration, but, with it, it amounts, we conceive, to a fair Scriptural demonstration. "By faith"—what then? Faith implies a testimony, and that testimony must have been Divine. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." If so, that "faith" which led Abel to offer a more excellent sacrifice than Cain must have come into existence and exercise simply in the way of his "hearing," or attending to some Divine communication, some "word of God" commanding him, and the entire fallen family of man, to worship him in the way of shedding and presenting the blood of sacrifice, and doubtless also unfolding, to some extent, its soul-saving import. If no such command or testimony had been given, *presumption*, not *faith*, would have been Abel's impelling principle and guide, and his name, instead of ranking "with the elders (or ancients) that obtained a good report," would have been associated with those of Nadab and Abihu, who offered strange fire unto the Lord, or gone down into the unexplored abyss of darkness and of ignominy that engulfed the company of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Our modern rationalists must forego their claim on Abel and be content with Cain. He is the true ancient type and representative of the system. Of all rationalists he is at once the oldest, the most eminent, and the most consistent, for, despite of reiterated testimony and remonstrance, he stuck to his creed, and wrote it, legible to the end of time, in the blood of his brother. Abel, on the other hand, was the true type and

representative of the humble, devoted, and resolute believer in Jesus. The "faith" by which he was led to offer animal sacrifice was not the faith or belief of *any* divinely revealed truth; it was the belief of the central and soul-saving truth, for it was by that same faith that he "obtained testimony that he was righteous," and by which, even now, "though dead, he yet speaketh."

We have now brought to a close our inquiry into the *Import* and *Origin* of sacrifice, and advanced enough, we presume, to prove that its import is strictly *propitiatory*,—its origin *Divine*.

How profoundly thankful should we be that the centre doctrine of the atonement, on which as sinners we rest our hope, is so ramified in God's providence, as well as rooted in God's Word, that ten thousand voices are ready, even from the heart of heathendom, to give virtual testimony in its favour! Conscience-stricken one, turn from carnal reason to the Word—from man to God! Throw yourself on the "sure foundation." Cling with a death-grasp to the atonement, as an atonement for you; and though the very billows of the lake that burneth should sweep around you on every side, your footing is firm, your salvation is sure. The atonement is a foundation on which you must be safe. It is a foundation broad as your utmost requirement—wide as the wants of a world. It is deep as the damning enormity of your sin, and as the hell of your woe. It is attached to something firmer than adamant, even to the pillars of the eternal throne. It is rooted in something more lasting than the living rock, even in the eternal principles of the Divine character and law.



VI.

ABEL—DOCTRINAL, AND PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS SACRIFICE.

Having considered some historical points on which the narrative respecting Cain and Abel sheds important light, and more especially, as we have endeavoured at some length to show, on the much controverted and interesting question of the Import and Origin of Animal Sacrifice,—one of the most striking moral phenomena in the moral history of our fallen world,—we now approach more particularly the primeval sacrifice of Abel, so as to unfold its Doctrinal and Practical significance. Under both these heads we shall have ample opportunity of discerning his exemplary faith.

I. Let us unfold the *Doctrinal* truths wrapped up in the garb of the sacrificial symbol. And here, to foreclose all mistake, be it understood that we by no means attribute to Abel the sundry doctrines we are about to state—beyond the dim but sufficient glimpses appropriate to his circumstances, with only a germinal Gospel, and living in the infancy of the world. And yet as childhood's faith, operating on its maternally instilled or primer-taught Gospel, is often purer, better, and more potential than the cultured faith of intellectual manhood, Abel's faith may have far out-distanced that of many who have enjoyed the full flood of Gospel day. Let it suffice, then, to explain in the outset, that as the Mosaic rites, and Christ's parables, and symbols in general, contain very much more than are at first

understood, and ought to be studied under all subsequent lights, so with Abel's sacrifice. We shall consider its doctrinal import under all available aids; and our references to Abel, therefore, under this doctrinal department, will be representative rather than personal.

1. Let us consider what we are taught by Abel's offering *in itself considered*, as we see it singled out from the flock, and led forth to the consecrated ground to be sacrificed. It is described in Gen. iv. 4 as one of "the firstlings of his flock;" that is, either the first-born or the best—probably both. Being from the flock, it is one of the most unoffending, gentle, and useful of creatures—a fit emblem of Jesus, the Lamb of God, as meek and lowly in heart, and inexpressibly tender in all his dealings with our sinful race. He came not in the might and majesty of Divinity, but in the lovely and lowly beauties of sinless humanity. He came not with Sinai's gloom on his brow, with Sinai's lightning in his eye, with Sinai's clouds for his pavilion, or with Sinai's voices, and trumpets, and thunders in his mouth. All these terrors he has; and as in a "garment of vengeance," he will stand arrayed in them at last. But he laid aside his glories when he came into our world, meek, lowly, and unresisting as the "lamb led to the slaughter," to make his way to a cross, and there "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." That eye that withered the stoutest heart in the ruffian-band that came to apprehend Him, and kept them with its transfixing glance stretched powerless on the earth, had only kindly smiles and compassionate looks and tender tears for the sinful sons and daughters of men! That voice that breathes the thunder, fell from the lips of Immanuel as a still small voice that fanned so as not to "quench the smoking flax." That hand in which slumbers Omnipotence, and which launched worlds into the wilds of space, was yet so tender as to handle and not "break the bruised reed." Beautiful is the contrast, in Isa. xl. 10, 11, which predicts His advent, between the majesty as God,

and the meekness as man, of our Immanuel Redeemer, in whom both are combined: "Behold, the Lord God shall come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him; behold his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young."

In looking more minutely at the victim lamb we find that it was "without blemish and without spot." This, indeed, is not specified in the narrative of Abel's offering; but it was so confessedly essential to the validity of all subsequent sacrifices, that no one will hesitate to admit that it was imperative from the very first. This conveys to us a farther and still more important truth. Not only was the victim selected from the most gentle and useful class of animals: the individual selected was to be spotless—the very best of its kind. We may conceive of persons as comparatively gentle, who are not morally spotless and perfect; but by these features of his sacrifice Abel was impressively taught that the Coming One was both; and as he raised aloft the sacrificial knife and plunged it into such a victim, he would see and feel that there was no reason in the lamb itself why it should be slain. It was the lovely emblem of innocence and peace; and while he would be led forcibly to introvert his eye to his own soul, to find out where the sin lay, he would be led for that very reason away from himself far forward into the future for the great Propitiation, which, without attributing too much to him, he could to some dim extent discern through the telescopic medium of sacrifice, the newly instituted symbol of the God given Lamb, who was expressly described long after as "without blemish and without spot."

Yes, Jesus was "manifested to take away our sins," yet in Him was "no sin." He was unremittingly beset by the machinations of hell; but though "tempted in all points," he was still "without sin." In every step of His pilgrimage His

path was crossed by bitter and malevolent foes, yet "he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." He associated daily, and ate and drank, and walked and talked, and had converse with those who were regarded as abandoned outcasts, yet he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Other men might, comparatively viewed, be holy, just, and good; but Jesus was by pre-eminence "the Holy One and the Just," and even devils were compelled to honour Him as "the Holy One of God."

We have thus contemplated the victim lamb *as it was in itself*, and we have seen, what Abel must have seen, that there was no reason in the lamb itself why it should be slain.

2. Let us now contemplate the lamb under the aspect *it came to assume* in the process of sacrifice. In itself considered, we have seen that it was sinless; but in the process of sacrifice it became sin. How? By imputation. The minute circumstances connected with Abel's offering are not to be looked for in a record so brief and sententious; but we are giving no undue license to imagination if, from the details of subsequent sacrifices, we select those that were uniformly regarded as essential to the validity of the rite, and transfer them to the primeval sacrifice of Abel. Such was imputation, as symbolically expressed by the imposition of hands on the head of the victim. Picture Abel, then, as he brought his lamb to the consecrated spot. He lays his hands on its unblemished head, as it stands before him a lovely emblem of sinless purity. By this he confesses his own sinfulness; for that extended arm is the conductor which faith voluntarily stretches out from a conscience charged with sin, to that devoted head on which God hath laid the iniquities of us all. It was the symbol of cordial acquiescence in God's saving plan, involving at once the confession of sin and the acceptance of the sinner's substitute; and echoing by that act of imposition, in the true spirit of faith, God's prior act of imputation, by which a world's sins were transferred to the

world's Saviour, and gathered like convolved thunder-clouds over His sinless head. Thus, as Abel stood, and with his hand on the head of his victim, confessed his sins, his liabilities, symbolically speaking, passed off from his sinful self, and rolled over on his sinless substitute, till it was viewed as covered with sin—till it might be constitutively regarded as itself sin. This explains the remarkable fact that the Hebrew term for a sin-offering is just the word which literally signifies *sin*.

We thus discover in those ancient sacrifices two apparently conflicting and yet most harmonious features, which God took care should be combined, and at the same time kept respectively most distinct, that the one might illuminate and intensify the other. The one was the perfect sinlessness of the victim, as "without blemish and without spot;" the other, its being constitutively made sin in the act of imputation. It is obvious at a glance how important it was to the true Scripture doctrine of sin, and of the propitiation—the doctrine that humbles the sinner and exalts the Saviour—that these two things should stand out in the ancient sacrifices in their distinctive significance. It is in this very distinctness that we discern their true and glorious harmony.

Thus the sinless Jesus stands before us as now "made sin," as "bearing our sin," as having accumulated on His guiltless head the "iniquities of us all." No reason was there *in Himself* considered why His blood should be shed, but there was a good reason *in what, by imputation, He became*. The reason was not *in Him* but *on Him*: it was our sins—unnumbered and innumerable as the vapour globules that compose the thunder-cloud, —every sin, even the least, being large enough and important enough to draw after it the elements of doom.

3. The *consequence* of this imputation was *death*, and that with an intensity of significance which we leave under the sacred reserve in which the inspired writers have invested it.

4. The manner in which the patriarchal and primeval, as well

as Levitical, offerings were consumed, was by a *heaven-descended fire*—the symbol, under this aspect, of the element of Divine infliction. It was thus that God testified His acceptance of every sacrifice that was honoured with a token of special regard. In this manner He accepted the offerings of Abraham, of Gideon, of David, of Solomon at the dedication of the temple, the similar offerings that accompanied the consecration of the tabernacle, the offerings of Elijah, and no doubt also the offering of Abel. (See Gen. xv. 17; Lev. ix. 24; Judg. vi. 17; 1 Chron. xxi. 26; 2 Chron. vii. 1.)

It is to be observed that the fire which descended on the sacrifices at the consecration of the tabernacle was to be so tended and fed that it should "never go out" (Lev. vi. 13). That was an important epoch. The detached and isolated sacrifices of the patriarchal era were now succeeded by a stated Levitical system, in which the lamb of the burnt-offering ever smoked upon the altar, in addition to numberless sacrifices of a special or voluntary description. Now the solemn fact turns out to be, that during the Levitical dispensation, as really as during the period that preceded, the fire that consumed the offerings was heaven-descended. The only difference was, that in the Levitical offerings the symbol assumed a stated character corresponding to the nature of the dispensation. And so thoroughly had this notion become associated with sacrifices that the prayer, Psa. xx. 3, "The Lord *accept* thy burnt-sacrifice," is literally in the original, "the Lord *turn it to ashes*."

This was the symbol of an awful yet attractive truth. *Awful*; for that heaven-descended flame was the symbol of the element that gathers around sin like a consuming fire. As the fat to the altar-fire, so is the sin-charged soul to this element of wrath which "burns to the lowest hell." Let the careless and carnally secure ponder well this truth. They are brands dry for the burning. Their hearts are oiled for the final fires. With their own hands they have piled up the fuel of Tophet within them,

and if they continue thus to the end, "the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone will kindle it."

But the truth has a *bright* as well as a dark side; for the flame that consumed the victim consumed along with him the sins that he bore. The down-streaming and devouring element of wrath fastened on the victim because, by imputation, the sins lay there; and when the victim was thereby consumed, so were the sins, in such a sense that the offerer thus appropriating the gracious provision was treated by God as if he had never sinned. As the stream of fire alighted not on Abel, but *beyond* him, even on the sin-covered but sinless victim which it consumed before his eyes, so "the chastisement of our peace" was laid on Jesus, that by His stripes we might be healed.

How manifest is it from the entire subject we have been considering that God loves the sinner with the same intensity that He hates our sins! and that the same heaven-descended fire that drained and dried up the life's blood of the Lamb of God for ever burned up the sins that were laid on His sinless head, and swept them clean away, considered as a legal barrier between God and man. "Now once in the end of the world hath Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. ix. 26).

II. Having unfolded the doctrinal import of Abel's sacrifice—as of animal sacrifice in general—let us now array the *Practical* lessons suggested by that solemn and interesting episode in the primeval history of fallen man.

To this we are furnished with a starting-point and a stimulus in the exquisite allusive statement at the close of the verse that heads this article—"by it he, being dead, yet speaketh." This is the only portion of the verse that yet remains to be explained: we have reserved it till now, that it might be noticed in its own appropriate, practical connection. What, then, does it mean?

First of all, be it observed that it is Abel's *faith* that is referred to in the little representative word "it." This is the

simple import of the original. In its full form, then, the statement is this: "By his faith, Abel, being dead, yet speaketh." Still, we cannot help regarding the language as somewhat peculiar, and naturally ask why the inspired writer chose such a singular method of conveying the idea that the faith of Abel, as exhibited in that ancient record, was fraught with instruction to all succeeding generations.

In reply, be it further observed that the words contain an allusion to the solemn and affecting words of Jehovah to the fratricidal Cain: "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." To these same words (which occur in the original narrative, Gen. iv. 10) there is another allusion in Heb. xii. 4, in the expression, "the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." In the words before us, that occur in the eleventh chapter, the apostle in effect says: We read of Abel's blood crying from the ground. In silent eloquence its appeal of right against might, of innocence against crime, ascended to heaven, and cried for vengeance. But Abel's faith is more eloquent than was Abel's blood. The voice of his blood, Esau-like, spake vengeance; the voice of his faith, on the contrary, is the voice of Jacob—it speaks in tenderness and love. The blood, moreover, soon dried up, and with the expiring breath of the fratricide its cry of vengeance died away from off the face of the earth; but Abel's faith yet lives and speaks: he holds the first and highest place among those "elders," or ancients, "who, *by faith*, have obtained a good report," and whose faith, in consequence—as part of "the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," and which is not only living, but life-giving—is an existing spiritual reality, that shall continue, in the hands of the Spirit, to exist, and speak, and operate on the souls of men from generation to generation till the end of time. Reader, this influence operates on you now. At this moment Abel has your audience. Venerable with the moral majesty of the primeval

age—the most grave and reverend era in the history of man—arrayed in the blood-red robe of martyrdom, and standing, as it were, on the isthmus that divides the world of sense from the world of the unseen, Abel's eye is now upon you; his voice is in your ear; he speaks to you with a death earnestness; he speaks to you in love; he speaks to you by his faith—and what does he speak? Amid much that might be advanced in answer to this question, let us ponder well the following counsels, as they fall from the lips of Abel.

1. Let us hear what the protomartyr has to say of the *exceeding* sinfulness of sin. Let us surround, in imagination, that placid and lifeless form—the first victim of death, and the first martyr of Him who shall destroy death—and listen to the blood that crieth from the ground; for Abel, “being dead, yet speaketh.” And what does he here speak? What is Abel's testimony as to the evil and desert of sin? Do you not hear the voice of his martyred spirit thus addressing you, in solemn earnestness, from behind the shadow of death:—Fellow-sinner, fellow-mortal, read the evil of sin as it is written in blood. Read it in my blood—the blood of martyrdom. Read it, above all, in His blood which I poured out, in symbol, at the altar, and for which, a suffering martyr, I poured out my own. His blood speaks more awful, as well as “better things” than mine; for His was not the blood of mere martyrdom, but the blood of propitiation. Think of Him, think of me, and say, Can sin be your friend, which brought such a one as He to the dust of death, and reached so fearful a maturity in the first generation of man? And can God be your enemy, in declaring Himself sin's foe, and making such a sacrifice in order to avert its bitter fruits? Do you not see that the poison of asps is in the cup of sin; that it “bites like a serpent and stings like an adder;” that it is in its very nature to “conceive and bring forth death;” that it is essentially, universally, and everlastingly murderous; and that (with reverence be it spoken) it is not even in the

power of God's Almightyness to make you happy if you will not consent to be made holy? The same cause that impelled Satan to ruin the first man, impelled the second man to kill me, the third man! That cause was sin. Away, then, to the remedy—the blood of Atonement! A better argument for our need of the blood of Atonement could scarcely be given than that which is written in the blood of martyrdom. Such a crimson tide of crime as we trace in the latter can be met and erased only by the cleansing tide of the former. Surely it is not tears, however penitent and prolonged, that can wash away the fratricidal blood as it lies clotted on the foul conscience of Cain, or quench its doom-denouncing voice as it cries from the ground. "All things," from such towering crimes down to sins of a lighter hue, "must be purged by blood"—by sacrificial blood—"and without shedding of blood there is no remission." Flee, then, to that Saviour whose blood more than answers all! "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!"

Such is Abel's testimony to the exceeding sinfulness of sin; such the purport of what, on this point, "he being dead, yet speaketh." His is a voice that yet speaks in accents as enduring as they are eloquent; and, like the thunder voices of Sinai, it shall speak louder and louder to the end of time. It is a voice equally eloquent of *sin* and of the *propitiation*. Inspired men call our attention to it in proof of both. It is thus a treasury of truth on the subject of sacrifice, the true Scripture doctrine of which is rooted in deep and vivid views of the essential evil of sin. One of the best elucidations of Abel's sacrifice is to be found in Abel's martyrdom—especially as evincing the exceeding sinfulness of sin, which is presupposed in the Divine doctrine of true and proper atonement.

8. Let the Christian be reminded, in the next place, that all that live godly in Christ Jesus must lay their account with suffering persecution. In Mat. xxiii, 35 our Lord heads the

roll of martyrdom with the name of "righteous Abel;" and the beloved disciple introduces him in substantially the same connection in the following passage of his First Epistle, chap. iii. 10-13: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, That we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." In this, as well as in the contextual inculcation of brotherly love, the venerable apostle doubtless had his eye on such statements of his beloved Lord as those recorded by himself in the 15th chapter of his Gospel, ver. 17-21: "These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not Him that sent me." To the same effect the apostle Peter thus speaks in his First Epistle, iv. 12-14: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."

We are thus taught not to "marvel" at persecution, nor to

"think it strange." It is the state of things to be expected as long as the world is the world, and as long as the church is the church. Before it can be otherwise the world must change greatly for the better, or the church for the worse; that is, to speak more correctly, the one or the other must cease to be what their names respectively express. Between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman nought but enmity can subsist. The reason is obvious. The world is swayed by selfishness; Christianity is a system of love. These two principles are as irreconcilable as fire and water, as opposite as light and darkness. Hence, if the Christian act in character throughout the entire tissue of his circumwoven relationships, and resolutely intersect the paths of selfishness with the beams of truth and of love, as he goes forth into the world's darkness, arrayed in "the armour of light," one of two results will inevitably follow: either his light will so shine (and how earnest ought to be his care and prayer that it *may* so shine!) as to attract his fellow-men, and lead them to glorify our common Father in heaven, in accordance with our Saviour's injunction in Mat. v. 16; or it will simply expose, and thereby exasperate, the corruptions of the wicked, and fire their hearts and nerve their hands to the sad alternative of persecution. The entire philosophy of persecution, if we may so speak, is wrapped up in the passages already cited, and more briefly in the following statements of Paul, and of one greater than Paul: "But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light" (Eph. v. 13). "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John iii. 20, 21). The light of Christian consistency is the very element that exposes, convicts, and rebukes the world,—just as a torch in a dark cellar exposes, disturbs, and affrights the broods of darkness

and pollution that may be rioting there. It was thus that Noah "condemned the world;" and it is thus that many an humble Christian explodes thousands of infidel sophistries by the burning fire of a luminous and well-sustained consistency; by the resistless logic of a holy life and of a happy death. To those that love the darkness, that will not shake it from them, that love it, cherish it, and wrap it more closely around them, all this comes home with scorching and withering glare; it falls like the blasting thunderbolt on their selfish heart, and, as a blazing missile cast into a gunpowder magazine, it kindles their corruptions and exasperates their soul into hatred and persecution of whatever wears the name of Christian. The child of God will not go far in any career of Christian effort without realizing in some measure this hostility of the world. Such was the experience of Abel; such was the experience of Paul; such has been the experience of the great and good of every age; and such pre-eminently was the experience of one greater than all, even the Master of all, the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the ministers of a collegiate charge in the city of Edinburgh, during the last century, was descanting one Sabbath forenoon on the beauty of virtue. He was one of those who discoursed more of the details of duty than of the vitalities of the Gospel. In the course of his preaching he remarked, that if the image of perfect moral virtue were to descend upon our earth, so resistless would be the attractions of its loveliness and majesty, that all men would at once fall down and worship it. His colleague, who was thoroughly evangelical in his sentiments, heard the statement; and in the afternoon, when it was his turn to preach, he very appropriately remarked, in direct allusion to what had fallen from his colleague in the earlier part of the day, that the image of perfect virtue had already descended to our world. It had descended in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who was the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person; but instead of all men falling down and

worshipping him, they exclaimed, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!"

3. Another lesson which Abel, though dead, yet teaches us, relates to the vast and widely extended influence for good that may be originated and propagated by a godly man, even though prematurely cut down in the very flower of his days. This fact, if realized and appreciated, will operate as a powerful stimulus to maintain in all circumstances an unswerving consistency, and leave the computation of consequences and of expedients to God. No such cold calculation entered into the martyr-spirit of Abel. Present duty was his: with nought else did he intermeddle. It might have been easy for him to accumulate plausible reasons why he should temporize with his brother, in the hope of thereby compassing a larger amount of ulterior good. But no. Faithful to duty, he left consequences to God; and the result is one of the most striking exemplifications to be found in the history of fallen man of the all-important practical truth, that a resolute adherence to present duty, whether persisted in without obstruction or quenched in a baptism of blood, will invariably be found in the long run, and in its more remote and extended bearings, to give a man the most enlarged and potent moral influence which his circumstances will admit.

In the light of this universal truth we see that the moral influence of the good man dies not when he dies, and may flow onward and downward till time shall be no more. Thousands of years have elapsed since Abel's blood crimsoned the earth's young bosom. Long has that blood been dry; and long have the bones of the protomartyr mouldered into undistinguishable dust. But though dead he yet speaketh. How? By his writings? No. By his exploits? No. By his affecting death? No, not even by that, considered simply as a tragical event, but by his *faith*, which speaks to thee, my reader, whether you be a believer in Jesus, or a Gospel-rejecting sinner the very chief. To the believer, to whom our present remarks more particularly

relate, he says: Persist, "steadfast in the faith;" see well to it that you make not shipwreck of faith and a good conscience; persevere unto the end; be faithful unto death; and if, like mine, your path be crossed by the fiery sweep of the sword of martyrdom, like me you will pass through all these tribulations to a heavenly kingdom and crown. Thus enduring is the influence and fragrant the memory of the righteous! "The memory of the wicked shall rot;" their fame, their name, their last memorial come to evaporate, beyond recall, from under their monumental pillars and pyramids, which crumble after them into dust; but "the righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance," and may, like Abel, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, confessors, reformers, and martyrs of every age affect the destinies of millions yet unborn, stamp their impress on all time, and in a down-bearing stream of undying and fertilizing influence, live, speak, and act after the columns of kings and conquerors have long been levelled with the ground. Yes! Of the Gospel, in its living influence, it may well be said,

"Millions of souls shall feel its power,
And bear it down to millions more."

O what a stimulus to the Christian—to the soul that burns with zeal for the glory of God, and compassionate love to his fellow-men! "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Rev. xiv. 12, 13.)

4. Finally, "Abel, though dead, yet speaketh," in the way of testifying to every sinner under heaven how his soul may be saved. On this point Abel's voice gives forth no uncertain sound. His testimony to the great propitiation is clear, emphatic, and direct. He taught the generation that followed

him; he teaches the generation that now exists; and he will continue to teach all that shall come after us to the very end of time, that there are not two ways by which sinners obtain acceptance with God; but that, under every variety and complexity of aspect presented by the dispensations and administrative arrangements of God, and by the state, character, circumstances, and attainments of mankind, "there is no other name [than the name of Jesus] given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved." Thus the great truth, as we have abundantly seen, which Abel sealed with his righteous blood, was the simple, central, and soul-saving truth of the Gospel. It is by his *faith* that he speaks—that faith in which he lived, and for which he died. In the sacrificial blood he presented, he recognized the atonement of Jesus as the only ground of acceptance, and sealed his testimony to that vital truth with the blood of martyrdom. He thereby intimated that he had no other truth to live for in time, or trust to for eternity, than the Gospel of pardon, peace, and eternal life, through the propitiatory blood of the Lamb of God, and through that medium alone. He obtained witness indeed that he was righteous: our Lord calls him "righteous Abel," and this testimony is in substance repeated both by Paul and John (Heb. xi. 4; 1 John iii. 12); but how was he righteous? Not by his works, but by his faith; not on the ground of any righteousness of his own, but on the ground of that propitiatory righteousness on which his faith terminated, and in virtue of which alone his faith was soul-saving. Abel was not accepted because he was personally righteous; nor was Cain rejected because he was personally a sinner. So far from this, Abel was accepted as personally a sinner; this being emphatically declared by the substituted blood of expiation, on the ground of which God could be just, even in justifying Abel the ungodly; while Cain, on the other hand, was rejected not as a sinner, but as a self-righteous, Gospel-rejecting, Christ-crucifying unbeliever; this being em-

phatically declared by the provision of atonement having been made and revealed to him as truly as to Abel, if not also by the fact that God kindly, graciously, and condescendingly remonstrated with him, even after his presumptuous and daring act of will worship, to betake himself without delay to the asylum of the Great Sacrifice, and in that common and open Fountain to wash all his sins away.

Thus it was as true then as it is now, that "he that believeth shall be saved, while he that believeth not shall be damned." Circumstantial differences of course existed; but these reached not the foundation. The ground of the sinner's hope has in all ages been the same. Abel looked forward; we look back. Abel, in that infant era, had his faith assisted by divinely-appointed and most wisely adapted symbols of soul-saving truth; we live in a more advanced age, under a more spiritual dispensation, when type, shadow, and symbol have long since melted away in the zenith splendour of Jesus the Sun of Righteousness. But these were mere differences of position; the object of faith was still the same; and on that central object of attraction, that common ground of salvation, the eyes of believers have alike rested, and their footing been alike firm, whether in their respective eras they have had to look forward, or to look back to the fulness of the times. We think of our antipodes as occupying the lower, and of ourselves as occupying the upper part of the surface of the earth; and consequently, in relation to the earth's centre, we feel ourselves to be attracted downward, while we conceive of them as attracted upward. But these are merely relative terms; and they and we shall have exchanged positions in the course of a few hours. Be our superficial standpoint respectively what it may, the great centre is still the same, and its universal attraction alike imparts stability to us all. So is it with the Cross of Christ, which was upreared in "the midst of the nations," in "the meeting of the ages," and on which the Lamb of God was "lifted up that he might draw all men unto

him," and "be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." Some have looked forward, others look back; some have looked through the telescopic medium of sacrificial symbol, others from a nearer and clearer point of view contemplate Jesus "with open face." It matters not. The ground of hope is still the same; yea, the exercise of *faith* is the very same. In every case they look for a righteousness away out from themselves, in the provided blood of expiation; they acknowledge that they are nothing, that "Christ is all."

Sinner, betake yourself, with Abel, to that atoning blood; it is described as "speaking better things than the blood of Abel." Vengeance, vengeance was the only accent which arose from the ground that was saturated with the protomartyr's blood; but from Calvary there floats the still small voice of pardon, peace, and eternal life. The Saviour's blood bedewed Gethsemane's garden; it crimsoned Calvary's accursed tree. Like Abel's blood, the earth drank it up, and like Abel's blood, its cry reaches heaven. Yes! Christ's blood even now speaks in heaven. But how or what does it speak? Not in wrath, but in love—

"Lo! Jesus' blood through earth and skies,
Mercy, free sovereign mercy, cries!"

It speaks and pleads in heaven for every act of homage or of service which the believer offers up in faith; and it seals the pardon of every repenting sinner, though a sinner the very chief. Sin-burdened soul, away to the Fountain! get your mind, your heart, your conscience, your whole soul, and your whole life, sprinkled with the precious and peace-speaking blood of the Lamb! Without hesitation and without delay plunge your soul into this cleansing tide; and though covered with sores, you will become sound in every part; though bloated with sin's defilement, you will emerge "clean every whit;" "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Brother, have you thus come to the Fountain, and obtained pardon and peace? Does your faith resemble Abel's in this, that it has led and linked you to Jesus, and drawn "the light of life" into your dark and desolate soul? There is another respect still in which it ought to resemble Abel's. By faith, besides coming to Jesus, Abel *spoke* and still *speaks*. See well to it that your faith speaks during your life, and that it continue to be eloquent of the Gospel, and of the praises of redeeming love, long after your tongue has mouldered in its socket, and the generation in which you live shall have passed away from the earth. A fountain of holy influence struck out by a good, though humble man, may flow through children to children's children, till it roll its enlarged and benignant volume to the very foot of the judgment throne! Happy the man whose faith shall then be found to have spoken with such effect, that spiritual children shall be seen clustering like halo-beams around his head, to gem his diadem of glory, and to all eternity call him blessed! The hour is rapidly on the wing when the "many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Then they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many unto righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."





VII.

ENOCH—HIS CHARACTER AND CAREER.

We come now to an ancient worthy who, in some marked respects, stands alone. There is a purity, there is a grandeur, there is withal a trail of celestial mystery that invest his record with singular interest, and make the introduction of him very natural after the protomartyr Abel.

Enoch's brief but eventful history divides itself readily into two parts—first, his Character and Career; and next, his Translation. It is with the former we have now to do.

What we have to say on Enoch's character and career we shall range under these heads following:—his Memorial, his Walk, his Work, his Faith.

I. Let us glance at his *Memorial*, or the place he occupies in history. This is soon told. His biography lies within the space of four verses in the fifth of Genesis. In an equal number of verses lies that of the penitent malefactor in the Gospels; and a similar remark applies to some of the most interesting characters of sacred history. Nowhere else in the Old Testament is there any mention of Enoch; but he is twice alluded to in that best of the Apocryphal books, the book of Ecclesiasticus. Twice also is he named in the New Testament, namely, in this cleventh of Hebrews, where we have an inspired comment which throws a flood of light upon his character and history; and in the epistle of Jude, which contains a brief but sublime fragment of his preaching.

Such are the Alpha and Omega of Enoch's memorial—so brief, and yet so glorious. There, in that spiritual firmament, he rises with the rest, and shines, a star of the first magnitude, with serene and steady lustre, till, on reaching the zenith of his course, he blazes out into a sun, and then suddenly disappears, snatched up into the third heaven. There is so much in Enoch's record of the clear, yet mysterious, of the striking, yet unexplained, as to invest it with the charm of a vague sublimity, and whet our desire to know more of this most heavenly man. This lack tradition and fable officiously pretend to supply. Whither was Enoch taken? Was it to some intermediate paradise? Or was it to the immediate presence of God? These and such-like questions were keenly discussed in the olden time. In modern times it has been a favourite theme with poets—as in James Montgomery's *World before the Flood*, and in another long and interesting poem that appeared several years ago, entitled *The Prophet Enoch*.

There is an uninspired Jewish book, called the Book of Enoch, which had great interest for the early Christian Fathers, and whose history is remarkable. They refer to it and quote it, but, with one exception, they never quote it as inspired. In the Western Church, from the time of Augustine in the fifth century, the book ceased to be known for a thousand years; though in the Eastern Church it continued to be known to a somewhat later date. These early notices and a few fragments constituted all that was known of the once famous book of Enoch till about a century ago, when, on the strength of a rumour that it was still preserved in Abyssinia, Bruce, the well-known traveller in these regions, searched out and purchased and brought home with him three copies of it in the Æthiopic language, which was first translated and published in English by Archbishop Laurence. The fragment in Jude was found in it. Though a purely apocryphal book it is a work of marvellous grasp, and of the more advanced type of Jewish thought. It

treats of the supposed revelations made to Enoch, and of the judgments inflicted on the giants—its great lessons being, God's moral rule, providence, final judgment, and kindred truths—and speculates largely, and of course blunderingly, on the mysteries of nature. Bishop Colenso, accordingly, tries, but unavailingly, to make capital out of it. The date of the book of Enoch is supposed by some to be as early as the second century before Christ, but others put it in the second century of our era. We may add that heathen mythology contains some striking allusions to Enoch, and to his translation prior to a deluge. He is also named very often as the founder of astronomical science; but this probably arose from the coincidence that the number of years he lived on earth was just the number of days in a year, viz. 365.

We have gone into these details because they are curious and interesting. But we now recall ourselves to the more spiritual aspects of our theme. Brief but brilliant is Enoch's memorial. Three words convey it. And such words! There was another Enoch, probably a hoary-headed contemporary of his in the accursed line of Cain, whose memorial, like that of so many Cainites since, consisted in having a city called after his name. How much grander our patriarch's memorial, "Enoch walked with God." "He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city." And yet this, thank Heaven, is no rare case. Many Enochs this moment walk the earth side by side with their God, "whom the world knoweth not," and of whom the world is not worthy. The Cainite men that take cities, or hold empire, are the renowned upon earth; but the holy, humble, godly Enochs are the renowned of heaven.

II. Enoch's *Walk or Character*, This is set forth in the simple but sublime testimony, "Enoch walked with God;" and as, in giving it emphasis, nothing higher or grander could be said, the testimony is repeated, "Enoch walked with God." This implies—

1. *Reconciliation*; for, as we read in Amos iii. 3, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" This self-luminous principle of the prophet we may take as a blazing torch in our hand with us, to open for us the significance of this first prerequisite to "walking with God."

First, Have we each seen to it that we are agreed with God in regard to the essential and mortal *malignity of sin*? Then, instead of "rolling it under our tongue," we shall spit it out as we would a venomous asp. If you have actually been lifting its cup to your lips, you will dash it with horror to the ground, as a "cup of devils." If you have been snared, young man, into a den of infamy, do not despair; but O take care and determine never to be snared thither again, for such sins are deadly, alas, most deadly; therefore resolve to throw a triple wall of breastworks between you and known sin, but especially between you and your besetting sin.

Again, Are you agreed with God on the *way of salvation*—renouncing your own self-righteousness as well as your sin?—meeting your Divine Father in peace and penitence over the sacrifice of Calvary—laying the hand of faith on that dear, divine, and devoted head where God had laid your sins, exclaiming, Not by works of righteousness, but by grace am I saved: grace, grace, none but Christ! I am dead with Christ, I am alive with Christ. "I the chief of sinners am, but Jesus died for me?"

Are you agreed with God in the element of *sympathy*? If of one mind with God, then we shall be of one heart with him, loving what he loves, hating what he hates. God loves human souls: do we love human souls? God hates sin: do we hate sin? God loves his infinitely well-beloved and only begotten Son: do we love Jesus as the altogether lovely? God loves mercy; it is His delight, and the enterprise of mercy is pre-eminently "His good pleasure:" is it *ours*? and is it our determination, like Enoch, "to do justly, love mercy, and walk

humbly with our God?" Reader, does just such congeniality subsist between you and the Divinity? Could He walk with you? Could you walk with Him? Suppose you had a favourite aim which kindled all your enthusiasm, which engaged your energies by day and your very dreams by night, which, in short, you lived for, and were prepared to die for, would you care much to have by your side all day long a professed friend who blew cold on the whole project, and whose heart was elsewhere? What pleasure, then, could you have in God, and God in you, if "His good pleasure" and yours tend towards opposite poles? To walk with God is to live with God; and if we would live *with* God we must live *to* God, and be heart and soul with him in all his aims. When God's spirit is grieved, let our spirit be grieved. When we look on abounding sin—when we see men rushing through all the Holy Spirit's hedges, over the Son's bleeding sacrifice, and, in defiance alike of the Father's love and of the Father's law, towards ruin, then like David, like Jeremiah, like Paul, like a greater still, even the blessed Jesus, let (in spirit at least, if not in temperament) our "head be waters, our eyes fountains of tears," and with our tears let there be prayers, and with both let there be effort to stem and battle down the evil and promote the good.

Further, Are you agreed with God in congenial *fellowship*? On this vital concern how read we? "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 3-7).

This last statement explains all. It were indeed an enigma how a holy God should permit fellowship with His thrice holy self to far from perfectly holy men; and the more we handle it in the mere dim light of nature, the more warped and insoluble will it become. It is certainly not because he counts sin a trifle: sin is the one thing which his soul hates. It is not because we have no sin; for here the apostle warns whoever would say this that he is not only deceived but "a liar." It is not that he contrives to forget his sinfulness, for though he did, God does not; and one flash of true communion would bring them out in zenith light, and "blacken every blot." Nay; it is God's very aim to convict us evermore of our sin; and paradoxical though the statement be, the happier and closer our communion with God, the deeper and more vivid will be our own sense of evil desert. There is but one key to the ever-deepening mystery, that here given by our apostle: the great atonement answers all: "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin."

Does this accord with our experience? It is a cheerless walk indeed when two professed friends can measure hundreds of paces together with the interchange of only a few formal words. If we feel the Bible to be irksome, in which God speaks to us; if we feel prayer to be irksome, in which we speak to God, this bodes ill for our communion with the Highest. Not thus was it with Enoch. He walked with God; and so may we. He rose above the marish mists and horizon fogs of the world, and "walked in the light of the Lord." Why may not we? He had the world under his feet to a degree which made translation itself but the complement of his spiritually gravitating bent. We, too, if we only will, may walk triumphantly "in our high places," and "bid earth roll, nor heed its idle whirl." What hinders you? Is it that you are at a loss to find the Presence; your "soul following hard after him," exclaiming, "I sought him, but I found him not?" That need not be, for

"He is not far from any one of us." Faith has but to uplift the veil, and wherever you may be, on land or ocean, at home or in the rural walk, lo! you find yourself bowing before the Presence, in a very Holy of holies.

"Lo, this is He whom long you sought,
And mourned because you found him not."

Finally, Are you agreed with God in the possession of a *godly character*? Proverbially, a man is known by the company he keeps. The essential condition of intimacy is congeniality in taste, habitude, and character. "Enoch," says Matthew Henry, "did not only walk after God, as all good men do, but he walked with God, as if he were in heaven already. He lived above the rate, not only of other men, but of other saints; not only good in bad times, but the best in good times." This godliness, it is needless to say, blazed out in practical zeal and jealousy for his God. Like Noah after him, he was "a preacher of righteousness," and a prophetic preacher,—for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and that delight in his covenant." "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" No. Why? "For," it is directly added, "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord" (Gen. xviii. 17, 19). Hence Enoch, like Noah, arrayed before men the terrors of the Lord connected with the yet distant, yet surely coming, and final day of doom (Jude 14, 15).

What a position of confidence and dignity! "I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Such honour more or less have all the saints; and to realize it and live in it is the noblest heritage on earth. "Methinks," says Richard Baxter, "he that shall say to me, Come, see a man that walks with God, doth call unto me to see one who is next unto an angel or a glorified soul. It is a far more reverend object in mine eyes than to see ten

thousand lords or princes considered only in their fleshly glory, —than to see the pompous trains of princes, their entertainments or their triumphs.”

III. Consider Enoch's *Special Mission* or *Public Career*. He walked with God, but he also worked with men. In 1 Sam. ii. 30, Zec. iii. 7, the official duty of the priest is called “walking before God.” And so is it always. Do you want true workers for God? Seek for them among the men that walk with God. The cowardly hermits that leave the world to sink or swim that they may walk with God are deceived or deceivers. How unlike the blessed Jesus, who spent whole nights, indeed, in prayer in the solitudes of a mountain; but only to arm himself for work next day for God and man. Peter would have gladly lingered on the holy mount, but Peter had to come down and feel his frailty, and draw out a long life of toil, crowned by a death of martyrdom. Enoch walked with God, but this only fed and fired his sympathies to speak and act for God and man. Noah and he present a striking parallelism. Noah is the only other person who shares with Enoch the testimony, “he walked with God.” Noah is declared by Peter to have been “a preacher of righteousness,” God through him having striven very specially with those antediluvian transgressors. Now this was also the grand work, or public mission, of Enoch, and a fragment of his very preaching is preserved for us in Jude.

As Bishop Colenso assumes that this fragment was by Jude quoted from the apocryphal Book of Enoch, and turns the assumption to ugly account, I remark (1), Even if it was, what then? Does not Paul repeatedly quote from the heathen poets? That fragment was not true because found in the Book of Enoch, but it would be quoted by the inspired Jude from the Book of Enoch because he independently knew it to be true. But (2) there is no proof whatever that Jude quoted it from the Book of Enoch, for it was a steady Jewish tradition; and as Jude knew it to be a true one, he would adopt it, apart from the

testimony of that or any other book. (3) The reverse is almost certain; namely, that that fragment of Enoch's preaching was quoted *from* Jude into the Book of Enoch, for the most probable date of this book is in the century succeeding that of Jude, and being much read by Christians, the passage of Jude was not improbably inserted into it.

Let us now turn to the passage itself: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (Jude 14, 15). It was in old Enoch's spirit and power that Elijah long after said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts," and that Paul exclaimed, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men,—for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (1 Kings xix. 14; 2 Cor. v. 10, 11). The world was waxing fearfully corrupt. Enoch was divinely sent to flash before them the terrors of

"That day of wrath, that dreadful day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away."

"As he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," many an antediluvian Felix would tremble, some, let us hope, with saving result; too many more but momentarily, when they could "turn again and rend him," or fling in his face the defiant query, "Where is the promise of His coming?" In these days how many make a mock of miracle and of eternal judgment! but let the truth be proclaimed "whether men will hear or whether they will forbear," and let them be urged to repent and believe, else "their judgment for a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." If five millennia have passed since Enoch preached the advent and

the judgment, how much nearer is it now? "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

IV. Let us finally contemplate Enoch's *Faith*, which was the root and source in him of all that was good. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes from the narrative in Genesis as given in the Septuagint version. Putting ourselves with those interpreters at the core of the whole matter, the following truths will result:—

1. Enoch's "walking with God" implied that he was "pleasing to God," on the principle already noticed in Amos iii. 3. Suppose there had lurked suspicion still, the old variances might have been smothered, but would not have been healed. Apologies and friendly protestations may have been exchanged, but if either or both refused to repose full confidence in the other, we know well how unsatisfactory the relationship would have been. Transfer the case between your soul and your God, and draw the appropriate moral.

2. To this state of pleasing God Enoch got by faith. He "came to God." Like the prodigal, "he returned to his father," for he was a sinner like other men; and this he did solely by faith, not only in God's existence, which is more than many attain in these bewildered days, but in God's propitiated relation to us as the Rewarder of the returning penitent.

In this aim Enoch took earnest pains. He "diligently sought God." Few, indeed, in such an age, were the influences that could be helpful to him; but it was a matter of life and death. Religion, if worth anything to us, is worth everything. Enoch "found" God because he "sought Him with his whole heart."

He found and he entered the door and highway of faith, by the plain and simple process set forth in ver. 6. Whatever seeming vagueness may lie in the expressions, "He that cometh

unto God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him," is due to this, that the Objective Gospel was as yet, though sufficient, of necessity vague. If, notwithstanding, Enoch found it, how much more easily should we, bathed in the zenith flood of evangelic day. Two articles are here distinguished in Enoch's Gospel. The first is that fundamental principle of all religion, natural or revealed—faith in a personal God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." When "the transgression of the wicked" too clearly indicates to the observant mind "that there is no fear of God before his eyes," the very soil of religion is gone, and must be replaced before any religious result can follow. Let the young man be especially careful to keep his heart tender, "trembling at God's word;" for true through all time is that dictate of heavenly wisdom, "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding" (Prov. i. 7; Ps. xxxvi. 1; Job xxviii. 28). The second article in Enoch's creed was its strictly propitiatory head, viz. that on a ground as yet but dimly revealed God is "the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." How this was set forth by holy prophets since the world began, and especially by the rite of primeval sacrifice, we have already, when speaking of Abel, abundantly seen.





VIII.

ENOCH—HIS TRANSLATION.

From Enoch's character and career, all vitalized by his faith, we now pass to contemplate the solemn event of his Translation.

1. Notice the *fact* of it. Had we only had the record in Genesis we could not have been so positive as to the fact. We must have been struck, to be sure, with its singular character. Of all the others it is said, they "lived," they "died." Enoch's "lived" is defined to be a "walk with God." Enoch's "died" is wholly absent, and instead of it we have the record, "he was not, for God took him." From this we might fairly infer his translation. But not with absolute certainty; for we say of a dear child, "God took him," meaning that it was by death He took him; and we might have explained the peculiar language as meaning merely an eminently holy life crowned by an eminently glorious and triumphant death. But the inspired comment in Heb. xi. puts the fact beyond all doubt; for there we are told in express terms that "Enoch was translated that he should not see death." In that vast graveyard of antiquity, then, Enoch too has his memorial, but it is the only one of its kind. On his monumental slab is not to be found sculptured the word "died," but something instead which tells us that we are standing on a cenotaph, on an empty tomb.

2. Consider the *manner* of Enoch's translation. On this we have no details, but on the only other case of the kind, the translation of Elijah, we *have* noteworthy particulars, and we

may warrantably imagine that Enoch was caught up in some similar way. It is further probable that, as in the case of Elijah, and of the blessed Jesus Himself, it was neither *public* on the one hand, nor quite *secret* on the other, but *private; i.e.* it would take place in the presence of select friends, who could therefore testify to the fact, and hand its record down. Be this as it may, Enoch underwent the change mentioned in 1 Cor. xv. 50-52; for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven." There is an ancient tradition, and it is not impossible, perhaps not improbable, that the miraculous rapture came in time to snatch the holy patriarch from the murderous hands of ferocious persecutors, whom he was solemnly warning on duty, destiny, and the judgment to come. James Montgomery, in his poem entitled *The World before the Flood*, turns this idea to fine account. Enoch is preaching to the scoffers, who kindle into fierce exasperation, and ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" and at length make a hostile rush upon him; but they smite on vacancy, for an unearthly change is passing over him :

"Thus when the patriarch ceased, and every ear
Still listened in suspense of hope and fear,
Sublime, ineffable, angelic grace
Beamed in his meek and venerable face;
And sudden glory streaming round his head,
O'er all his robes with lambent lustre spread;
His earthly features grew divinely bright,
His essence seemed transforming into light."

3. Notice the *effect* of Enoch's translation. "He was not;" or as the apostle has it (after the LXX.), "he was *not found*," words which imply that Enoch was *missed*; that he was *sought for*, but could not be found. So of Elijah we read that the sons of the prophets, hardly believing Elisha, and deeming it likely that "the Spirit of the Lord had taken up their master, and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley," sought

for him three days, but it is added, they "found him not" (2 Ki. ii. 17). Like Elijah, Enoch was a man to be missed. As John the Baptist was the New Testament Elijah, Enoch was the antediluvian Elijah; universally known, universally persecuted, and yet universally feared, as an intrepid prophet, reformer, and preacher of righteousness.

Brothers, were we to die to-night should we be missed? In the near circle of kin no doubt we should. The widow will involuntarily look for the departed husband at the meal hour, and will converse with him on home affairs, as a dim but dear mystery, in the dreams of night. A mother will miss, or rather cannot miss, a darling child, now in better hands than even her own. I knew a parent in a certain city, who, eminent minister though he was, on losing an only son and only child, could not help going from chamber to chamber, and from corner to corner, and calling on him by his dear familiar name. Many a bereft mother knows well what this means; and very touchingly is the sentiment thus expressed by a great genius:

"Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me;
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form;
Then have I reason to be fond of grief."

Yes; the little chamber, the couch, the dress, the toy, even, seem vocal with the chilling words, The dear one *is not*. And yet these words do not mean *he exists not*; but only that he no longer exists *here*. Here on earth he is no longer to be "found," and for the same reason as in the case of Enoch—for God hath taken him; not indeed in a fire-chariot, but not the less has He taken him. And the thing left for us to say is, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." In the case of Enoch, however, the loss was public *as well as private*. He was truly one that would be missed; in

him the world lost its best, and truest, and most faithful friend. And the lesson this brings us is, that we each ask ourselves, Were I to die this night, would the world miss me and have cause to miss me? Would it be any the poorer for the lack of me? God keep us all from living as cyphers in the world, and fire our souls with the ambition so to live, that whether appreciated or not during our lifetime, we may be missed when we die.

4. Consider the special *design* of Enoch's translation. So far as Enoch himself was concerned this is obvious enough; it terminated his trials and sufferings; it stamped his testimony as true; and it crowned his career of faithful contendings with a signal and glorious reward.

So far as concerned that fast degenerating and God-defiant generation, it sublimely taught them that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth;" that truth may be in a minority, even if in a minority of one; that that minority, with God behind it, becomes an infinite majority; that there is a spiritual world, as well as a sensuous world, a Futurity as well as a Present, a heaven or hell as well as earth; that "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished;" for God by this miracle declares that Enoch's words will come true, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all." Abel's martyrdom had taught the godly to be faithful unto death, and to reckon it no strange thing if they should be called to seal their testimony with their blood. Enoch's translation taught them that God's eye was upon them, and that He could and might interpose, and, at all events, that great at last should be their reward in heaven. Abel's death, too, might typify Christ's sacrifice; and then Enoch's translation would typify His resurrection and ascension. These and other truths needed to be taught with special emphasis then, for a midnight gloom of moral darkness was settling down on the world. It was nearly in the middle period between the creation and the flood.

It was in every respect a fit period for a striking testimony. All the patriarchs named in this 5th of Genesis were alive, except the first and the last—except Adam, who had died fifty-seven years before, and Noah, who was born sixty-nine years after. Both these had miraculous testimonies to confirm their faith in truths relating to eternity. It seemed desirable that in Enoch's time some such miraculous testimony to the same truths should be given. Already that important movement had taken place indicated in Gen. iv. 26, "Then began men to call themselves by the name of the Lord" (margin). The Church now began to stand aloof from the world; iniquity abounded: scoffers poured forth blasphemies which tainted the universal spiritual atmosphere of the young earth, and Enoch stood forth faithful among the faithless, almost alone in the breach. The miraculous translation of this, the best known and foremost man of his day, was adapted, and no doubt intended, to confirm the godly and convict the impious. It was God's seal on his mission, testimony, and character; just as Elijah's was on his; just as Christ's resurrection and ascension were, in a still higher sense, on his. Happy had it been for that godless antediluvian generation had they but caught the mantle of the ascending prophet, by drinking into his spirit, as did, long after, Elisha that of Elijah, and the disciples that of Jesus, and by improving the unspeakably solemn providential event. Long had the Spirit striven with them for this end. Long was He through Noah to strive with them still. It was in love He strove; but He strove in vain; and at last the flood had to come and overwhelm them all.



IX.

NOAH—DIFFICULTIES CONNECTED WITH THE FLOOD.

From Enoch, "the seventh from Adam," as Jude calls him, most natural is the transition to Noah, the tenth from Adam; for of Enoch and Noah alone of these old-world patriarchs is the expression used—"they walked with God."

But the mention of Noah conjures up to us on the foreground of our theme, that prodigious scare of scientific unbelief, and even of weak-kneed faith, and stock projectile of infidelity in every age—the primeval deluge, surmounted by its solitary ark. To enter minutely into such questions would be quite alien to our present task; and yet to give them wholly the go-by might be somewhat disappointing. We shall therefore despatch, in the first place, what brief reference it may seem needful to make to these difficulties, and then address ourselves in the second place to our proper and principal task, that of illustrating in detail the prominent features of Noah's faith.

1. The fact of the deluge is vouched for by Scripture from beginning to end. It rests on no mere isolated document, whose venerable antiquity might be supposed to condone its mythical defects, and procure its admission into the sacred canon among other primeval fragments that had their value, and even their share of inspiration, but neither of a sort to be unduly pressed. Besides the large space it fills in the sacred history, and the probable allusion to it in *Psa. xxix. 10* ("Jehovah

sat as King at the flood"), it is expressly named by prophets (Isa. liv. 9), by Jesus Himself (Mat. xxiv. 37; Luke xvii. 26), and by holy apostles (1 Pet. iii. 20; 2 Pet. iii. 5, 6). It is a fact, then, to which the Bible stands committed, and with which its inspiration must stand or fall.

2. It is corroborated by an unprecedented and marvellous mass of tradition. These have long been collected and arrayed by learned men, especially by the Rev. J. V. Harcourt in his *Doctrine of the Deluge*. They embrace the Egyptians and the great Asiatic races from east to west, the classic peoples of Greece and Rome, the Celtic and other barbarian races of the North, and the Mexican and Peruvian aboriginals of the New World. Nay, the frozen regions round the pole, as Sir John Richardson discovered, had not proved impervious to the general tradition. The flood itself could hardly have been more universal than the traditionary memorials of it. Most of these traditional deluges have been conceived of as local rather than as universal. Familiar to every school-boy in Latin is the story of Deucalion, so charmingly told by Ovid. Even coins have come down to us that represent the deluge. The later the tradition the more coherent it is, and the more nearly, as the rule, does it conform to the inspired account. This latter feature is specially manifest in those of Western Asia, conspicuous among which is the Chaldean, which is thus given by Derosus. After stating that it happened in the time of Xisuthrus, the tenth in descent from the first man, in terms of due warning by the god Kronos, who told him in a dream to build an immense ship, and store it with provisions, and different kinds of animals, and embark in it with his wife and family and personal friends, on which the disaster came, and the world perished, the Chaldean historian thus proceeds: "After the flood had been upon the earth and was in time abated, Xisuthrus sent out some birds from the vessel, which, not finding any food, nor any place where they could rest, returned thither.

After an interval of some days Xisuthrus sent out the birds a second time, and now they returned to the ship with mud on their feet. A third time he repeated the experiment, and then they returned no more: whence Xisuthrus judged that the earth was visible above the waters; and accordingly he made an opening in the vessel, and seeing that it was stranded upon the site of a certain mountain, he quitted it with his wife and daughter, and the pilot. Having then paid his adoration to the Earth, and having built an altar and offered sacrifices to the gods, he, together with those who had left the vessel with him, disappeared. Those who had remained behind, when they found that Xisuthrus did not return, in their turn left the vessel, and began to look for him, calling him by his name. Him they saw no more, but a voice came to them from heaven, bidding them lead pious lives, and so join him who was gone to live with the gods; and further informing them that his wife, his daughter, and the pilot had shared the same honour. It told them, moreover, that they should return to Babylon, and how it was ordained that they should take up the writings that had been buried in Sippara, and impart them to mankind, and that the country where they then were was the land of Armenia. The rest having heard these words, offered sacrifices to the gods, and, taking a circuit, journeyed to Babylon" (Smith's *Dict. Bib.* art. NOAH).

Whoever shall follow these radiating lines of tradition, and make due allowance for the mythical accretions they could not but gather in their way, can have little difficulty in acquiescing in these just remarks of the great Humboldt: "Like certain families of the vegetable kingdom, which, notwithstanding the diversity of climates and the influence of heights, retain the impression of a common type, these traditions of nations display everywhere the same physiognomy, and preserve features of resemblance that fill us with astonishment. How many different tongues, belonging to branches that appear completely distinct,

transmit to us the same fact! The bases of the traditions concerning races that are destroyed, and the renewal of nature, scarcely vary, though every nation gives them a local colouring. In the great continents, as in the smallest islands of the Pacific Ocean, it is always on the loftiest and nearest mountain that the remains of the human race have been saved; and this event appears the more recent, in proportion as the nations are uncultivated, and the knowledge they have of their own existence has not a very remote date." If the whole world has had such a faith, let it not be thought a thing incredible that the infant world should have perished by a flood.

3. Does the surface of the earth corroborate Scripture and tradition by any traces of such a catastrophe? Once it was thought to do so, and that everywhere. Not only shells and other marine fossils on mountain tops, but the very disposition of the earth's strata were all explained by the deluge. "Scarcely an appearance," says Dr. Pye Smith, "of entombed organization could be presented, but it was at once set down to the account of the deluge. The contents of all caves containing bones were supposed to have been floated or driven into them by those mighty waters. The scooping out of valleys, whether with the most abrupt sides and tortuous courses, or in smooth and gentle undulations of outline, found forthwith a ready explanation; without any exercise of mind upon the inquiry, whether such a diversity of effects does not imply a proportionate diversity of causes in nature, intensity, and duration. All, or nearly all, the superficial drift, consisting of sand, gravel, and rolled pebbles of all sizes, up to the boulders of some thousand cubic feet, were, implicitly, and without further examination of cases and circumstances, ascribed to one and the same cause—the diluvial waters. In short, persons have not been wanting, even down to the present day, who have maintained that all the remarkable appearances on the surface and beneath the surface of the earth, the depositions, the fractures, the dislocations, the denud-

ations, the transport of materials, and the entire formation of strata, are the effects of the deluge" (*Geol. and Script.* 5th ed. p. 100). The breaking up of the fountains of the great deep might mean any amount of convulsion and dislocation, and a universally surging ocean would deposit their memorials over all heights as easily as in the hollows. Even infidels were staggered by the facts of shells and corals being found at the top of high mountains. "So troublesome and inconvenient a proof did it seem to Voltaire that he attempted to account for the existence of fossil shells by arguing that either they were those of fresh-water lakes and rivers evaporated during dry seasons, or of land-snails developed in unusual abundance during wet ones; or that they were shells that had been dropped from the hats of pilgrims on their way from the Holy Land to their own homes; or, in the case of the Ammonites, that they were petrified reptiles" (Smith's *Dict. Bib.* art. NOAH). Nonsensical as this is, it is worth quoting just to show the combined pertinacity and credulity of unbelief.

Though those old notions have been utterly exploded by the advance of the new and true science of geology, it by no means follows that the earth's crust has no light to shed on the ancient deluge. It has certainly no memorials of the kind once assumed, but in the new and better light of geology itself it has confirmation to render of a kind immensely more important. It reveals upheavals and subsidences on land, submarine changes of level under volcanic and other agencies, advances and recessions of the sea, incessant movement, often in waves, of the crust of the globe, with earthquake throbs that often send the ocean waters with desolating fury over vast regions of land. Be it only supposed that such agencies, so far as required, were called into operation with exceptional activity, and we have all we need in the form of scientific factors of Noah's flood. "If," says Professor Sedgwick, in a letter to Humboldt, "we have the clearest proofs of great oscillations of natural level, and

have a right to make use of them while we seek to explain some of the latest phenomena of geology, may we not reasonably suppose that, within the period of human history, similar oscillations have taken place in those parts of Asia which were the cradle of our race, and may have produced that destruction among the earlier families of man which is described in our sacred books, and of which so many traditions have been brought down to us through all the streams of ancient history?"

4. Is it necessary to understand that the deluge was strictly universal? It is fitting that we deal with this question here; for if no such necessity exists, then nine-tenths of the scientific objections to the flood will directly take themselves away, with the remaining tenth at their heels. These difficulties are many of them petty in the extreme. We confess to having felt a sentiment of relief, on perusing Bishop Colenso, to find such an array of argument about snails, lizards, and other details, that appeared to us to have in reality no business there. Honest and truth-loving let him be, he still betrays the unconscious bent to seek difficulties rather than simply find them, and to magnify them more than is meet. When his intelligent Zulu asked of the Bible narrative of the Flood he was translating, "Is all that true?" it is to Colenso's honour that we read thus: "My heart answered in the words of the prophet, 'Shall I speak lies in the name of the Lord?' (Zech. xiii. 3). I dared not do so." But he may have brought prejudices or idiosyncrasies to the question which he was not careful to correct. Geology, he says, had taught him that a universal deluge was impossible. But to the suggestion, What need is there to understand it as universal? he is content to reply, "Such attempts have ever seemed to me to be made in the very teeth of the Scripture statements, which are as plain and explicit as words can possibly be"—surely a rash, and we will add most unintelligent assertion. So is his next assertion that nothing is really gained by

supposing the deluge to have been partial, seeing that water would find its level, and would, if it covered Ararat, soon "sweep over the hills of Auvergne." No intelligent man now supposes that it covered Mount Ararat, or that the Bible intimates any such thing; while the objection grounded on water finding its own level betrays a singular inconsideration (we will not say inacquaintance) with the familiar geological phenomena of local subsidences and submergences, that vindicate and explain the theory of a partial deluge.

We shall not lay much stress on the scientific objections that have been urged against the universality of the flood; partly because some of these are of doubtful weight, but mainly because the miraculous character of the catastrophe puts all such objections out of serious account. In the negative point of view there is confessedly no trace of a universal flood on the surface of the globe, the older notions to this effect being long exploded. The very drift, as Hugh Miller and other eminent geologists have shown, pertain to a long anterior period, and is restricted to defined latitudes; being the gravelly deposit of the diluvial period that set in on the break up of the glacial age. The positive arguments drawn from present indications on the earth's surface against a universal deluge are chiefly these two: First, in Auvergne and Languedoc, in the south of France, there is a region more than forty miles long by twenty broad, and a similar district along the spurs of Mount Etna, that abound in extinct volcanoes, with cones of loose scorix and fine ashes, which geological data prove to be immensely older than Noah's flood, whose waters, if universal, must have swept them clean away, and yet there they stand undisturbed since their first deposition. Some scientific men, however, who have since inspected those pumice cones, pronounce them much *farmer* than had been alleged. The other indication is that furnished by enormous trees in Africa and America, whose ages, as determined by the number of concentric rings that grow round

their pith at the rate of one each season, are alleged to be from 4000 to 6000 years, and thus to be older than the flood, whose waters, however, if universal, must have extinguished their life. This argument seems on various accounts precarious; and especially for this, that these trees reach back so little, if at all, anterior to the flood, that there is room for possible question, either on the side of natural history or on the side of chronology. In the former point of view the testimony of Professor Carpenter to the fact that these concentric lines are probably formed at the change of the leaves, and that in tropical climates the leaves are often renewed twice or thrice in the same year, is candidly introduced by Dr. Pye Smith in the fifth edition of his *Geology and Scripture* (p. 413), and appears to strip that tree argument against a universal flood of all its significance.

A much more conclusive scientific objection would lie in a quarter the least suspected of all, namely, the effect of a universal deluge on both marine and fresh-water forms of aquatic life. A flood surmounting by fifteen cubits the loftiest mountain-summits on the surface of the earth would produce changes, chemical and mechanical, and variations of life-levels, that would prove fatal to a large proportion of the teeming life of stream, lake, or sea. Other evidence connected with natural history might easily be arrayed, such as that grounded on the restricted habitats of many creatures, so overwhelmingly argued out by Hugh Miller, against Dr. Kitto, in his *Testimony of the Rocks*. Once more, the immensity of species of living creatures renders the preservation of them in any floating menagerie or museum simply inconceivable. Time was when these species were numbered by hundreds, and accommodated without difficulty in the ark; but now that they are numbered by myriads, nay, by hundreds of thousands, the notion is simply preposterous.

We come now to the material question, What, in reality, saith the Scripture? Are its statements, fairly interpreted, as

absolutely universal as they at first seem? Now it is a significant fact that old interpreters, at a time when those formidable modern scientific objections lay not at all in their way, were led by fair common sense principles of Scriptural interpretation to adopt the theory of a local deluge. The old and learned synoptist, Matthew Poole, who creamed off all the expositors, says: "It is not to be supposed that the entire globe was covered with water. Where was the need of overwhelming those regions in which there were no human beings? It would be highly unreasonable to suppose that mankind had so increased before the deluge as to have penetrated to all the corners of the earth. It is indeed not probable that they had extended beyond the limits of Syria and Mesopotamia." Vossius to the same effect says: "No reason obliges to extend the inundation of the deluge beyond the bounds which were inhabited; yea, it is altogether absurd to aver that the effect of a punishment inflicted upon mankind only should extend to those parts where no man lived. Although we should, therefore, believe that part of the earth only to have been overflowed by water which we have mentioned, and which is not a hundredth part of the terrestrial globe, the deluge will, nevertheless, be *universal*, since the destruction was universal, and overwhelmed the whole habitable earth." Bishop Stillingfleet, in his great work *Origines Sacre*, says: "I cannot see any urgent necessity from the Scripture to assert that the flood did spread itself over all the surface of the earth. That all mankind (those in the ark excepted) were destroyed by it is most certain, according to the Scriptures." After a few sentences explanatory of this, he goes on to say: "So then it is evident that the flood was universal as to mankind; but from thence follows no necessity at all of asserting the universality of it as to the globe of the earth, unless it be sufficiently proved that the whole earth was peopled before the flood; which I despair of ever seeing proved. And what reason can there be to extend the flood beyond the

occasion of it, which was the corruption of mankind? And it seems very strange, that in so short an interval, in comparison, as that was from Adam to the flood, according to the ordinary computation, viz. 1656 years, and not much above two thousand according to the largest, the world should then be fully peopled, when in so much longer a space of time, since the flood to this day, the earth is capable of receiving far more inhabitants than now it hath. The only probability then left for asserting the universality of the flood as to the globe of the earth, is from the destruction of all living creatures, together with man." This he most conclusively answers from the need there would be to repopulate the vast desolated region with man's companions in the lower tribes, as well as with man himself. His whole reasoning is rational and judicious (*Orig. Sac.* v. ii. pp. 130-134).

But perhaps the Scripture terms are so intractable as to bind us down to the alternative either of accepting the flood as co-extensive with the globe, or of contradicting the Bible. Such is the dilemma on which Bishop Colenso would impale us. Let us see.

Be it distinctly noted, then, in the outset, that we do indeed believe in the universality of the flood in the only sense that is essential, and that in this sense Scripture explicitly declares it to have been universal. It was universal in the sense that it was co-extensive with the human race. This Scripture declares, and declares in such a way as fairly to determine the latitude in which we are to explain the connected expressions in the narrative. This universality is set forth in such statements as these. After describing the universality of corruption, "the sons of God," and the "sons of men," once distinct, having now flowed together in sin's crucible into the one mass of corrupt generic "man," the narrative thus proceeds: "And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of *the earth*; both man and beast and creeping thing, and the

fowls of the air." "And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold I will destroy them with the earth." Other statements follow to the same effect; but these will suffice. They show (1) that the sole reason of the flood was the universality of human corruption; (2) that to purge the earth of this corruption, it was sent—Noah and his family excepted—to sweep away universal man; (3) that the animals living along with man, and the region he inhabited, should of necessity be involved with him in the same catastrophe; (4) that beyond this, no end, cosmical or other, was contemplated, and, therefore, no hint is given of any part of the earth's surface being involved beyond what had relation to living man.

Now, knowing what popular language is, and how freely superlatives are used daily, could anything be more natural than to indulge in these, in relation to so vast a disaster, without thereby meaning to transcend the region inhabited by man? What, or how much, lay beyond was entirely above their ken. That the world was round, that three-fourths of it were already water, that it contained vast solitudes where the foot of man had never trod—all this was a sealed book. What imaginable bearing could it have on the moral end meant, to deepen the ocean waters by a few miles all the world over, and send them careering over the icy solitudes of Nova Zembla and either pole? And how common are the expressions "all the world," "under heaven," "every one," "everywhere," and the like, without ever thinking of having them pressed to the quick? Of nothing are we more convinced than that all terms of universality in the narrative of the flood, however apparently absolute, are already conditioned and determined by that prior universality of the human race, and are to be all explained within that clearly defined limit. In so acting, besides obeying the dictates of

common sense, we shall also be following the lines clearly laid down for us in the popular language of Holy Writ.

For what, after all, are the terms of universality that are supposed to be so intractable? We know none stronger than these: "The waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth, and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered." Understand this only of the horizon concerned, and the only horizon manifestly meant—the horizon of universal man;—understand the hills with the same application, as embracing the loftiest elevations in the region of his abode; and what great difficulty remains?

But let us now vindicate our assertion that by this we shall no less honour Scripture usage than we shall honour common sense. This we shall do in the words of Dr. Pye Smith:—

"To those who have studied the phraseology of Scripture there is no rule of interpretation more certain than this, that *universal terms* are often used to signify only a *very large* amount in number or quantity." The following passages, taken chiefly from the writings of Moses, will serve as instances:—"And the famine was upon all the face of the earth" (Gen. xli. 56, 57); yet it is self-evident that only those countries are meant which lay within a practicable distance from Egypt, for the transport of so bulky an article as corn, carried, it is highly probable, on the backs of asses and camels.—"All the cattle of Egypt died;" yet the connection shows that this referred to some only, though no doubt very many; for in subsequent parts of the same chapter the cattle of the king and people of Egypt are mentioned in a way which shows that there were still remaining sufficient to constitute a considerable part of the nation's property (Ex. ix. 6, 10, 19, 22, 25; xiv. 26, 28).—"The hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field;" but a few days after we find the devastation of the locusts thus described: "They did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees, which the rain had left" (Ex. x. 5, 15).—"All the people

brake off the golden ear-rings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron" (Ex. xxxii. 3); meaning undoubtedly a large number of persons, but very far from being the whole, or even a majority, of the people, as we may reasonably infer from the circumstance that the stroke of punitive justice for this act of idolatry fell upon only three thousand persons, but the entire number of the Israelites at that time was a million and a half, and of them six hundred thousand were grown men trained to arms.—"This day will I begin to put the fear of thee and the dread of thee upon the face of the nations under all the heavens" (Deut. ii. 25); yet this declaration respects only the nations of Canaan and those lying upon its frontier, all being within a very small geographical district. We likewise find the phrase "under heaven" employed by the inspired writers to signify an extent of country, large indeed, but falling exceedingly short of a geographical universality; as, "I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven. There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." With this passage is combined a geographical enumeration, which points out the extent of country intended as being from Italy to Persia, and from Egypt to the Black Sea; and thus a probable elucidation is given to the declaration of the apostle, that "the gospel was preached to every creature which is under heaven" (Eccl. i. 13; Acts ii. 5; Col. i. 23).—"Ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it, and the Lord shall scatter thee among all peoples, from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth" (Deut. xxviii. 63, 64); a prophetic description of the dispersion of the Jewish people, as the punishment of their apostasy from God and rejection of the Messiah, but no one can regard the expression as denoting a proper geographical universality.—"The fame of David went forth into all the lands [the plural of the word generally rendered *the earth*], and Jehovah put the fear of him upon all the nations"

(1 Chron. xiv. 17). This expression cannot be taken as reaching beyond the range of Syria, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Arabia, and Egypt.—“And all the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom” (1 Kings x. 24). This cannot be reasonably understood of any resort but that of embassies and complimentary visits from sovereigns and states within such a distance as might have appeared immense in those times, but which was small compared with even the then inhabited parts of the earth. The Queen of Sheba was, we may think, undoubtedly the principal of these visitants. Our Lord Himself condescended to use the style of the Jews in saying of her that “the queen of the south came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon” (Mat. xii. 42). Yet her country was on either the eastern or the western side of the Arabian Gulf, about twelve or fourteen hundred miles south of Jerusalem; a mere trifle compared with distances familiar to us in our days.

Passages are numerous in which the phrase “all the earth” signifies only the country of Palestine. (Deut. xxxiv. 1; Isa. vii. 24; x. 14; Jer. i. 18; iv. 20; viii. 16; xii. 12; xl. 4; Zep. i. 18; iii. 19; Zec. xiv. 10). In a few places it denotes the Chaldean Empire (Jer. li. 7, 25, 49); in one, that of Alexander (Dan. ii. 39).—(*Geol. and Script.* 5th ed. pp. 263–271).

Assuming the local character of the deluge as now universal'y admitted by all who are competent to deal intelligently with the question—for Dr. Buckland and others came candidly to own that their previous vindications of a universal flood were no longer tenable—the next question naturally relates to the probable numbers and place of abode of that primeval generation, as so far determining the incidence and extent of the catastrophe. If we are to credit Dr. Thomas Burnet, who, in his *Theory of the Earth*, levels the original world into an undistinguishable plain, with “not a wrinkle, scour, or fracture,” there would be need for all that extended arca of unbroken fertility, for he makes out the human population of the globe at the

time of the deluge to have been ten thousand millions, equal to its present population some ten times told! This would level all high places of debate between the universal theory and the partial, for less than universal no flood could well be whose sweep had to engulf a population like that. The actual truth is estimated, with little variation, at a much more modest, and we may add, a much humaner figure. Dr. Murphy in his *Commentary on Genesis* (v. 17-24) estimates, on what seems very rational data, that the human race then living did not exceed four millions; and this may be taken as representative of the estimate generally made. The region covered by this population need not, and indeed could not, have been large. What that region was is well understood in the main,—for points of topographic detail have no significance in a wholesale question like this. Disperse as they might, it may be held as agreed that they could not have transcended the limits of Mesopotamia and some of the adjacent regions of Armenia and Syria.

Now, it is no uncommon occurrence that subsidences of the land should take place over large areas, accompanied by desolating inundations. No further gone than 1819, such an event happened in the delta of the Indus, which converted no less than 2000 square miles of territory into an island sea. No region could be named more fitted for such an occurrence than that mentioned above as the admitted cradle of our race. By this we do not mean to divest the deluge of miracle; infinitely far from that; but merely to indicate how the Divinity, who is not prodigal of miracle, even when working miraculously, could supernaturally work pre-existing natural adaptations to serve the end. Many have been the explanations given by Christian geologists and expositors, and often by men who combined in rare degrees the highest qualities of both, showing how naturally by land subsidence the terrible catastrophe could be brought about. A lucid summation of these has been given by Dr. Robert Jamieson of Glasgow, in his commentary (Gen. vii.),

parts of which will serve our end. We leave the reader to picture to himself the process of submersion, as the land subsided, causing fissures that might communicate with the ocean, and thus more literally break up the fountains of the great deep, accompanied by atmospheric perturbations and rain torrents, which, however, were of minor account as compared with the oceanic flow, till the elevations gradually disappeared, and to a spectator from the ark, whence the scene is imaginatively surveyed and portrayed, no peak remained to relieve the monotony of the melancholy main, from horizon to horizon, wherever man had ranged. After the flood had served its end, a re-upheaval of the land, equally miraculous, would reverse the process, and restore the countries as before.

"Now," says Dr. Jamieson, "there is in Western Asia a remarkably depressed area, extending from the south of Aral to the Steppes of the Caucasus on the north, and sweeping round the northern shores of the Caspian, comprehending Ararat and the great Salt Desert, which, as Ansted has remarked, 'forms no inconsiderable portion of the great recognized centre of the human family. The Caspian Sea ($83\frac{1}{2}$ feet below the level of the sea, and in some parts of it 600 feet deep) and the Sea of Aral, occupy the lowest part of a vast space, whose whole extent is not less than 100,000 square miles, hollowed out, as it were, in the central region of the great continent, and no doubt formerly the bed of an ocean.' Dr. Pye Smith and Hugh Miller conjectured that this immense district might have been partly the scene of the Noachian Deluge. The latter supposes that this depressed region subsided until 'the fountains of the great deep were opened' by the influx of waters from the Gulf of Finland, the Black Sea, and the Persian Gulf, on opposite sides; and though the area included within those isolated seas was probably far larger than was occupied by the antediluvian population, the circle might be widened for the inlet of the waters. The ideas of those two

writers have been strongly corroborated by the testimonies of several scientific travellers who have carefully examined the whole of this region. Mr. Hamilton, President of the Geological Society, thus records the results of his observations: 'A little beyond Maurek I found a thin bed of pale yellow sand, filled with innumerable shells, resembling those near Khorasan, overlying a bed of concretionary calcareous marl.' After describing these as 'bearing incontrovertible evidence of the existence of a large body of water containing animal life for a short period after the cessation of the igneous action, for the bed in which they occur overlies the great deposits of tuff and volcanic ashes,' he goes on to say: 'I am disposed to look upon these marl beds as the deposit thrown down when the waters accumulated in these spots by a great deluge began to subside: the lakes and inland seas thus formed would, during a portion of their existence, soon teem again with animal life, the remains of which are, I think, preserved to us in the thin shell-beds above described.' That deluge he thinks to have been none other than that of Noah. 'Since, then,' he concludes, 'we have the evidence of Scripture that the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat (Armenia), and consequently that this portion of the globe was flooded by the deluge which occurred in the time of Noah; and as there is no reason to suppose that these plains have ever been subsequently flooded, it does not seem presumptuous to imagine that this shell-bed was the result of the Noachian deluge, and was deposited during the period when the accumulated waters remained in this portion of the world' (*Researches in Asia Minor, Pontus, and Armenia*, 1842)."

That the mountains of Ararat mean, not Mount Ararat, but, as the inspired language plainly indicates, the mountains or higher elevations of a certain country so named, and which is coincident with Armenia, may be held as no longer matter of dispute. This disposes at one sweep of the argument for a

universal flood grounded on its having surmounted by fifteen cubits the lofty peaks of Ararat—an argument only too cogent had it been true, and which, as Dr. Pye Smith calculates, would have involved the enlargement eight-fold of the ocean waters of our globe. This forked mountain, with its higher and its lower peak crowning its immense mass, has attracted such interest, and been so often described in connection with our present theme, that, irrelevant though it has all turned out to be, we cannot help introducing the most recent, and certainly one of the most graphic and authoritative of all the descriptions that have ever been given of the giant mountain. Mr. James Bryce, the author of that able work, *The Holy Roman Empire*, has just published, under the title of *Transcaucasia and Ararat*, his notes of a vacation tour in those regions in the autumn of 1876. It was long before Mount Ararat was ever ascended, and very rare has been the feat. Mr. Bryce has added one to the list, and under circumstances of prodigious daring. His Cossack and Kurd guides led him to an elevation of 12,000 feet, but there, through terror or superstition, refused to advance a step further, while his companion, through physical prostration, was unable to proceed. Alone, through dense mist and over unknown ground, Mr. Bryce prosecuted his ascent, when, happily, the mist cleared away. The following is his description of the mountain, and it deserves citation the more that, besides being the picture of a personal observer, it is also the newest and the best:—

“It is so dry, so bare and woodless, so generally uniform in its structure, having neither spurs running out nor glens running in, even the colours of its volcanic rocks have so little variety, that a traveller, especially an artist, might think it unpicturesque and disappointing. Even of scenery of the sterner sort—precipices and rock gorges—there is not much to be seen on the mountain itself, save in the Great Chasm, whose head is surrounded by appalling cliffs, and on the upper south-eastern

slope, where ranges of magnificent red crags run down from the summit. The noble thing about Ararat is not the parts, but the whole. I know nothing so sublime as the general aspect of this huge yet graceful mass seen from the surrounding plains; no view which fills the beholder with a profounder sense of grandeur and space than that which is unfolded when, on climbing its lofty side, he sees the far-stretching slopes beneath, and the boundless waste of mountains spread out under his eye. The very simplicity, or even monotony, of both form and colour increases its majesty. One's eye is not diverted by a variety of points of interest; all the lines lead straight up to the towering, snowy summit, which is steep enough on the upper part to be beautiful, while its broad-spread base and rocky buttresses give it a sort of stately solidity. The colour is as simple as the form. From a gently inclined pedestal of nearly whitish hue, formed, as has been said, of volcanic sand and ashes, the steep slopes rise in a belt of green 5000 feet wide; above this is another zone of black volcanic rock, streaked with snow beds; highest of all the cap of dazzling silver. At one glance the eye takes in all these zones of climate and vegetation, from the sweltering plain to the icy pinnacle, ranging through more than 14,000 feet of vertical height. There can be but few other places in the world where so lofty a peak (17,000 feet) soars so suddenly from a plain so low, 2000 to 3000 feet above the sea, and consequently few views equally grand."

Besides its manifest inaptitude as a place of descent for the inmates of the ark, Mount Ararat lay much too far to the west to answer the conditions of the sacred narrative, which traces them after the flood from the very opposite quarter of the Armenian mountains in the north-east, down in new streams of population to the Mesopotamian plains. But the express terms of the Scripture narrative, which mention a country, and not a particular mountain, and a country whose very name can apparently be made out to be coincident with Armenia, makes it wholly

unnecessary to say more of Mount Ararat in connection with the deluge. It only remains to understand that the ark rested on one of the elevations far to the eastward in the submerged portions of Armenia. That elevation may have been of any height, under the level of submergence, so far as the account goes. And even the height of inundation appears to have been left indeterminate; for the fifteen cubits above the highest elevations—half the height of the ark—is thought by some, with no small probability, to indicate only the depth of water the ark drew, compatibly with its floating clear. It is not even certain that the phrase “rested upon the mountains of Ararat” meant that it grounded upon them, though ultimately it would ground either there or on lower ground, but more (as the Rev. N. Morren, of Greenock, suggested, with the concurrence of able writers since) that the ark rested *over* those still submerged Armenian highlands in the sense of coming to a pause, instead of drifting about as it had hitherto done. This idea is much favoured by the supposition generally adopted as to the *rationale* of the diluvial process we have indicated above; for, on the subsidence of the land, the ocean waters would pour in, and on the crest of this high but probably gentle ocean tide from the south the ark would float gradually to the northward, over the submerged Mesopotamian plains, till, on the inundation reaching its height, the flotation ceased for a time till retrocession began, and the ark by-and-by grounded among those higher lands of Armenia.

Let this suffice for a brief treatment of the difficulties, scientific or other, connected with the deluge. As it is, we have dilated on them to an extent considerably beyond what we had intended.

Noah, true to the “faith” he possessed, and to the “righteousness” he “preached,” signalized his descent from the ark by sacrificial oblations to his God, who in him, as in a new rock of humanity, renewed and ratified by solemn tokens his gracious

covenant, involving all Messianic blessings to him and to his, and to all the families of humankind. The drift and genius of that covenant are finely evolved by the prophet in the following heart-cheering words: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Isa. liv. 7-10).





X.

NOAH—HIS FAITH AND HIS FAITHFULNESS.

II. Dismissing these scientific and other stumbling-blocks that have met us somewhat menacingly on the threshold of our theme, we come now to closer quarters with Noah himself, and in particular to elucidate his faith along the lines which the sacred writer has here so handily laid down for us. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (ver. 7).

Before proceeding to deal with this piece of portraiture in detail, we may remark that Noah appears to have been born and cradled in a domestic atmosphere of faith. What Paul says of "the unfeigned faith which dwelt first" in Timothy's "grandmother Lois and in his mother Eunice," as, in the apostle's persuasion, dwelling "in Timothy also," may be here applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to Noah and his parentage as happily one in the faith. Of his father Lamech the record is brief; but it is much that in those primeval tables a name should have appended to it any record at all. Strange to say, we have a brief record attached to each of the two Lamechs; and the contrast between the two is as marked as are the characteristics of their respective lines of descent. The Lamech descended from Cain speaks of weapons, and slaughter, and sevenfold

revenge (Gen. iv. 23, 24). The Lamech descended from Seth, whose memorial also has come down to us in the form of a brief saying from his own lips, on the birth of his first-born, as we read (Gen. v. 29), "called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." Brief though this is, it contrasts significantly with the other. It bespeaks honest and arduous industry, resignation under trial, devout recognition of the merited curse, humble acknowledgment of Jehovah, and grateful acceptance of providential blessedness as superabounding over earthly ills. Lamech's afflictions had doubtless been much embittered by the dark shadows of spiritual declension that were rapidly settling over the infant world and deepening into doom. The line of demarcation, so broadly drawn seven generations back, in the time of Enos (Gen. iv. 26), between the godly and the profane, was now virtually obliterated. The sons of God intermarried with the daughters of men. Both classes had come to coalesce in the common name of "man," and in the one category of "flesh," the symbol of universal and indiscriminate corruption, and God's long-striving Spirit was about to make way for sweeping judgment. Violence and rapine walked the world, and wreathed themselves with "renown." Man's cup was full to brimming over; "yet," says a merciful God, "his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." These were the days, and such were the times, "when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved by water"—saved, in other words, by means of the floating habitation which the same waters that submerged the wicked upbore on their bosom, and kept in safety till the indignation was overpast. (Gen. vi. 1-3; 1 Pet. iii. 20.)

We are now prepared to deal directly with the faith of Noah, as set forth in the characteristics which the sacred writer here

compendiously, yet amply, arrays. We might profitably enough travel from clause to clause, and certainly no method offers greater facility of treatment; but it may better serve the ends of doctrinal precision to group the various features of Noah's faith here enumerated under these four propositions:—Noah's faith, like other evangelical faith, must, in the first place, have had an object; secondly, that object is to be looked for in the sphere of "things not seen as yet;" thirdly, the faith will give rise to corresponding emotion; and fourthly, it will not stop short at emotion, but go out straight to corresponding action.

1. Noah's faith had an Object; and this we find in the expression, "warned of God." Devoid of an object, faith has no meaning. You may so designate some mental exercise; but while it may be conjecture, while it may be fancy, while it may be assumption or presumption, if it has no testimony for its basis, it has no title to the name of faith. Had Noah grounded his expectation of the coming deluge merely on the world's wickedness, and the hope of his safety on his own righteousness, that expectation would not have been faith but presumption; and his predictions of the catastrophe, instead of being "the work of faith," would have been a mere burst of fanatical frenzy, which would have made him richly deserve all the ridicule he got. The ground of Noah's faith lay not in anything he saw either in himself or in others, but wholly and solely on a testimony from God. Had it been otherwise, the phrase "by works" would have begun the verse more fitly than the phrase "by faith."

Let the anxious inquiring soul note well the application. The great question with you is, "How shall a man be just with God?" Is he, in relation to me, or is he not, a well-pleased God? How are you to get at the answer? Clearly not by aught you can see in your own holy experiences or good works; else false were the apostolic caveat, "By the deeds of the law

shall no flesh be justified in his sight." If God be not already to you the propitiated or pacified Divinity, antecedently to and independently of anything you can do or feel, it is not your believing that will make him so. If, on the contrary, He is already in this propitious relation to you, and tells you that He is, then your simple faith on that Gospel testimony—and the simpler and more child-like your faith is, the better—has a basis much too adamant for the gates of hell to shake from under you, even the word of the ever-living and life-giving God. It is no part of faith to make a truth; it is faith's part to believe what is already true. It is through the atonement of Christ that God stands to us sinners as "the God of peace." We see this to be God's specific and loving message to us and to "all men everywhere," in the everlasting Gospel. By faith in this "we set to our seal that God is true;" and straightway, in response, God's seal appears in our heart, in the "great calm" of Gospel peace, and in the outwellings of Christian righteousness.

All this plenitude of experience had Noah. The expression "warned of God" represents only a fragment of the object his faith had to operate upon; though in principle and in living effect the operation of his faith was the same in this little fragment of it that pertained to the flood as in all the rest. But that his faith had already embraced all the rest only helped him the more to embrace this unwelcome fragment also; while, in the reflex point of view, his prompt acceptance and self-denying carrying out of so trying a testimony was irresistibly evidential of his higher faith and hope. Hence the generalized statement which the sacred writer appends: "By the which (namely, faith) he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

2. The object of Noah's faith embraced "things not seen as yet"—a manifest allusion to the opening words of definition which declare faith to be "the evidence of things not seen."

Its sphere is the past and the future; and if it also embrace the present, it is still in matters unseen. To a man standing visibly before us we might say, "I *perceive* you are present," but we would not say, "I *believe* you are present." This realm of the unseen, in that hemisphere of assured hope which the Gospel throws open to the vision of faith, is what the sacred writer, in the previous context, holds up to those wavering Palestinian Christians, when, after shaming them with the stirring memories of their better and nobler past, in which "they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods," he points them forward to their animating future in the words—"Knowing that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance, cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward" (Heb. x. 34, 35). So, of the patriarchs he says, in the 13th verse of the chapter before us: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

Thus acted Noah. Before him were set "the mercies of the Lord" in the promised Messiah, and "the terrors of the Lord" in this specific warning of the flood. Neither were "seen as yet," but, true son of faith that he was, he believed both. By this faith, as we read, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Hence, "the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation" (Gen. vi. 8, 9; vii. 1). He was "righteous," but it was by faith in the yet unseen "Jesus Christ the righteous." He was "perfect," but it was by being "complete in Him." He was "just," but it was "by faith." He found "grace," or favour, for "it was of faith that it might be of grace." His Gospel warrant or testimony was the first Gospel in Eden, and its subsequent renewals; and with him specially, after the flood had swept the

old world away and inaugurated a new, was the great Messianic covenant of promise renewed and solemnly ratified with the blood of sacrifice (Gen. vi. 18). All this stands out plainly in the Old Testament record; and hence it is here, as we have seen, brought out into bold relief in the statement that by his faith "he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

Thus far for his faith in the unseen "mercies of the Lord." Turn now to his faith in the "as yet" equally unseen "terrors of the Lord" announced in that specific "warning" of the flood. It was not only unseen; there was no faintest indication of it. To the eye of sense, as to the scoffers yet to come, "all things continued as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. iii. 4). But Noah's faith, having God's word to rest on, swept all these mountains of difficulty headlong into the midst of the sea. Hence, minute and multiform and elaborate as the divine instructions about the ark were, Noah set about them, nothing doubting: "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Gen. vi. 22). How strong must the faith have been which thus sustained him in a task at once so conspicuous and apparently so uncalled for. What taunts would assail him as the huge fabric rose! It would be daily pointed to as Noah's folly, and as one not only of an ungracious and uncharitable implication, but of a gigantic magnitude and a persistency that would be set down as simply insane. At every stage they would be attempting to reason or to ridicule him out of that prodigious project of launching so vast a leviathan on the billows of an imaginary and shoreless sea. Where, they would ask, is the sign of the coming deluge? All was calm. The sky was serene. Ocean lay peaceful within his yellow zone. Rivers might swell, but they subsided. Tempests might arise, but they soon hushed themselves to rest. What could Noah say in reply but this: "The thing is not seen as yet." No sign of it can I point you to; but it is not the less

certain, for God has spoken it; and "let God be true if every man should be a liar." Noah "walked by faith and not by sight." To God the future is as vivid as the present; and to whatever extent God reveals it to us, our faith will discern it with its own measure of vividness too. Many a sad picture would Noah's faith conjure up to him of the coming catastrophe—fountains bursting, rivers swelling, lakes heaving and overflowing, oceans meeting and interblending, and the arrowy torrents descending out of a frowning heaven. No doubt some of these "terrors of the Lord" he arrayed before his contemporaries; just as preachers do now, often also to sceptical ears, of the coming deluge of fire; just as Enoch did, in the same primeval time, of the judgments connected with that solemn event, yet future, when "the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints" (Jude 14). Ah! how earnestly would Noah plead as by faith he saw these now merry faces haggard with despair, toiling up the higher steep, concentrating as they ascended, followed with steady aim by the remorseless wave, "like a staunch murderer, steady to his purpose;" as he saw a world withering away in the frown of its God, wrapt round in what was at once its shroud and its grave; sunless days dawning dimly on starless nights, till the winds and waves sung their requiem over the last of that faithless generation of men.

Would that the heedless of this generation would but think there is a day coming which will bring its deluge too, but in that more dreadful form thus described by the apostle, when, directly after mentioning the flood, "whereby the world that then was perished," he adds: "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Pet. iii. 6, 7). The date of that day of wrath no man, no angel knows; but how comparatively near must it be now if men were eighteen hundred years ago urged to prepare for it as what might at any time dawn on an awe-struck world; as

what would come "as a thief," "as a snare," "as the waters of Noah" upon the earth; and as what, come when it might, would find the world very devoid of that "faith" which the Gospel demands (Luke xviii. 8), and therefore evoke a general wail of blank astonishment and dismay: "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." For with awful suddenness will He come. Was the flood sudden? Was the Sodom catastrophe sudden? Is the fiery bolt sudden, which, the moment it darts from its gloomy lair in the convolved mass of the thunder-cloud, is simultaneously seen to flash through the entire horizon? These are all of them images used by Jesus himself of his second advent: "For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark; and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also, as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke xvii. 24-30).

Why has not Jesus come long since? Let an apostle reply: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise (to come again), as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. iii. 9). Be this cited for our encouragement; but also for our warning—for mark that much-meaning phrase in the same connection, "by that same word" (ver. 7). As Noah was "warned by God" of the flood, and the flood

came, so, "by that same word," says the apostle, the earth "is reserved unto fire." If we have the like warning with Noah, let us see well to it that we receive it with Noah's faith.

3. Noah's faith stirred within him *emotions* corresponding to its object: he became "moved with fear." And yet we read that he walked with God in peace; as his name betokened, he had rest. Both statements are not only true, they are true for the self-same reason, that we are so constituted that our thoughts influence our feelings, and both influence our choices, and all influence our conduct and character. Noah believed the Gospel testimony; this from its nature inspired him with peace. Noah believed the specific testimony about the flood; this from its nature inspired him with fear.

Here, as before, let us make faithful application to ourselves of both these aspects here illustrated of the emotional effects of faith. Let us do so with reference to the two corresponding poles of Christian faith, that presented to us in Christ's first coming, and that presented to us in His second coming. If we make true believing use of the former we shall, like Noah, have peace with God, and with God we will walk. If we make corresponding use of the latter we shall be conscious of a certain fear and awe in view of that solemn and stupendous event; and if we are only faithful to these our true and genuine emotions we shall foster and fan them, and be daily careful to translate them into appropriate practice.

4. Noah's faith stopped not short with emotion, but added to itself "virtue," or courage, and bravely bore itself out to corresponding *action*. His major faith,—faith in the Gospel,—which gave him peace, also inspired him with zeal, and had already developed that conduct and character, as the embodiment of his faith, which, alone of that generation, obtained him "grace in the sight of the Lord." His minor faith, that relating to the flood, not only prompted his most assiduous endeavours in the timely construction of the mighty ark, and sustained him in and

through it all under whatever storms of relentless ridicule he may have been doomed to encounter, but it intensified into white heat his entire evangelical zeal, and made him redouble his exertions as "a preacher of righteousness." For such is the name an apostle gives him (2 Pet. ii. 5); and to this function, as a fellow-worker with the Holy Spirit, does the statement in Gen. vi. 3 not obscurely point when it speaks of "God's Spirit" as "striving with man," and names the "hundred and twenty years" as the period when, as an apostle tells us, "the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was a preparing," and during all of which, we may be sure, the patriarch faithfully laboured as a "preacher of righteousness" and a prophet of the Most High.

Let us imitate his example, be our sphere what it may, in the way of substantiating our faith by our works, and embodying it in a walk and conversation becoming the Gospel. And let us also, like Noah, improve minor lessons or warnings that may come to us in the course of Providence, analogously to that which came to Noah about the flood. "Hear the rod, and him that hath appointed it." "When God's judgments are in the earth, let its inhabitants learn righteousness." Come in what form these providential warnings may, they have all the same kind of moral—"Consider!" "In the day of adversity, consider." "Work while it is day;" "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest." These lessons have a threefold incidence of application,—as here exemplified by Noah,—to ourselves, to our families, to our fellow-men.

Noah secured his own safety, as a matter of course; and had he evinced no earnestness for this end, small indeed would have been his chance of moving the hearts of his own home, not to name the outlying world. It is after strong spiritual grapple with the obstructive giants in our own path, and with the life-and-death question, "What must I do to be saved?" that, like the Pauls, the Luthers, the Knoxes, and the faith-heroes

of all time, we "turn out" with effect "to the help of the Lord," and wax "valiant and do exploits." In this vital element of practical zeal let us be careful to begin at the beginning.

This done, the first and weightiest volume of overflow will be on "those of our own house." By its own native gravitation "charity will begin at home." The regenerate and loving demeanour can never be other than potential; how much more when it prompts us to "speak to our children" on those vital interests "in the house, or by the way, at our rising up and at our lying down." In this spirit "Noah prepared an ark to the saving of his house." And in this same spirit was it said long after to the Roman warder at Philippi, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Truly touching was the dying charge of one we well knew, in which the mother and the Christian spake in one symphonious voice, when she said to her like-minded husband of the children she was leaving, "See that ye bring them all with you." All true parents, like Christiana, will set out for heaven, leading their children in their hand; and if in this changeful world and age they should be scattered and broken, what matters it if they meet at last as one unbroken and reunited family in heaven?

Such are the hopes that cheer the just;
These hopes their God hath given.

He says: "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Finally, the outwelling wave of "faith working by love" will overflow on the surrounding world, with diminished weight, belike, as it surges onward and around, but strong and true so far as its influence extends. What momentum must it have had to send a Paul, like a daily heaven-fed mountain stream, "from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum," if not also to our own shores? Or to send a Xavier with the uplifted cross over

the boundless regions of the East, till, prostrate on the burning plain of Santian, with mortal fever careering in his veins, he exclaimed in his dying delirium, "Amplius! amplius!" "Further and yet further," till voice and force were still, and the heaven-enkindled spark soared upward to its source. Thus did Noah. In the spirit of the world-conqueror of whom an ancient poet sings, that "he reckoned nothing done while aught remained to be done," he warned and remonstrated and contended to the last. Nor can we deem that it was all in vain. With Bishop Horsely (on 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20) we cling to the belief that even after the whelming waters of the flood came, perhaps with gradual advance, not a few would recall his teachings and be brought in contrition to the feet of their God; and though the terrible words Prov. i. 24-27 would still be verified as pertaining to their mortal part, their souls might be saved—"yet so as by" water. It is not for us to trace exhaustively the incidence of our influence. It can never be fully known till the judgment of the great day. Parents with erring children ranging a colonial wilderness may comfort themselves with the strong hope that their faithful instructions may come back with power either spontaneously, or in "the cloudy and dark day." Therefore let them, as loving and wise householders, deal out "the children's bread" of life, and that with no stinted hand. Ministers may drop seeds into stray minds that may wing them as with the thistle-down and bear them with vivifying results for themselves and others to regions far beyond their ken. Therefore let us oftentimes con the words: "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." Let no Christian worker in any circumstances despair. "Preach the word: be instant in season and out of season." "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."



XI.

ABRAHAM—HIS CALL.

Taking even the common chronology (which is probably much too short) more than 2000 years, a period longer than the Christian era, intervened between Adam and the remarkable man of whom we are now to speak. And yet one intermediate life, that of Noah, nearly bridges the chasm. Such was primeval longevity, that 126 years more added to Adam's life and two to Noah's would have linked the three into one living chain. And such, alas! was the subsequent curtailment of the life term that, while ten generations intervened between Adam and Noah, and ten between Noah and Abraham, the former cover a period of 1656 years, while the latter amount only to 356.

During that score of generations (without assuming the many too probably omitted) men lived, loved, laughed, wept, schemed, toiled, wrangled, and died. The struggle for existence developed arts, ambition and rapacity forged arms. Giants appeared on the earth, prodigies of pride and of prowess, "mighty men which were of old, men of renown." But where are they? Their very memorial has perished with them. Genealogical lists made up, we may assume, of other names than theirs, with an incident or two to relieve their general barrenness,—such is the final all of antediluvian history. And what better is to be said of the ten generations that follow? Two chapters, made up mostly of names, comprise their poor memorial, relieved only by an ethnological hint or two, by the

dim shadow of the wild hunter and marauder Nimrod, and by that first of building follies, the Babel scheme, begun in blasphemy and ending in babblement.

This brings us to Abraham, with whom and in whom proper history begins. We are to speak of his Times, of his Call, and of his all-conquering Faith.

I. His Times. These, rightly discerned, are a needful background on which the grandeurs of his character may be correctly seen. The deluge has done its baptismal work. It has "removed the stumbling-blocks with the wicked." It has swept the young earth clean with the besom of destruction. Humankind under Noah, like a minor Adam, has got another chance; and has gone on repopling the purged earth for three centuries and a half. The boy Abraham looked back to Noah and the flood over the same breadth of time that we do to Luther and the Reformation.

Alas! corruption had again set in. The immediate descendants of Noah, appalled by the catastrophe, would probably keep themselves for a time where the ark rested, among the mountains of Armenia. But as they grew in numbers and in confidence, they descended into the fertile plains of the Tigris and the Euphrates, where pride and luxury rapidly effaced the solemn lessons of the flood. That Babel tower on the plain of Shinar was too probably an idol temple; and the turpitude thus inaugurated extended itself in the general dispersion into the motley mythologies of antiquity. Traditions of the glory at Eden's gate, and dim recollections of more recent visions would prompt them, after they had sinned these privileges away, to snatch desperately at idolatrous substitutes for the vanished glory. To this Paul seems to refer when, speaking of the origin of idolatry, he says that "they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man." The first form of idolatry, and the least corrupt, would naturally be the Sabian, or fire-worship, especially the sun, moon, and

other celestial luminaries. Thence a descent would be made to gods, goddesses, demigods, and heroes—ideals respectively of strength, beauty, and other distinguished qualities. Ere long, and by sure gravitation, they got down, as Paul tells us, and as history shows, "to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things."

As the form of rule was still patriarchal, and the state was but the family, or at most the tribe, household gods became common. Thus was it in the times, and in the very family of Abraham. His father Terah had not escaped the prevailing taint. He and others might still revere the true God, and mean the idol to be only a help or vehicle of worship. God Himself reminds the Jews that He had brought their founder "from beyond the river and from a land in which his fathers had worshipped other gods." Yes, other gods. Pretend or delude themselves as they may about worshipping God through the idol, in the long run it comes to this, that the idol gets all. Instead of mounting to God on the back of the idol, by a sure gravitation the idol drags us down and ever down till the one true God entirely disappears. If history teaches us anything it teaches this. Polytheism, like a noxious weed, came to overspread the ancient world. Like a dense forest jungle it shut out the eternal lights of heaven, and bred under its shadow all moral miasmata and venomous serpent broods. In the East, the gods have been numbered by millions. In Greece they were computed by myriads. Paul's fervid soul burned within him as he saw Athens bestudded with idol sculpture; verifying the sarcasm that went forth upon it, that in that city it was easier to find a god than a man. Athens was the pinnacle of highest culture; and it was the highest of all high places of sensuous idolatry.

Such was the goal towards which, in Abraham's time, the world had begun its march, and which, by the time of Christ and his apostles, it had actually reached. Hence the need for

divine interposition. A second time God-given truth was burning out in its socket. Solitary lights here and there shot struggling rays through the gathering gloom; but they were now few and far between. When God was left to lament, only Noah "have I seen righteous before me in this generation," the flood was near; else one generation more might have quenched the last Gospel light in universal gloom. And so, at this second lapse, but for God's oath not to destroy the earth again, judgment could not have long lingered. As it was, something must be done. Men were multiplying, Gospel light was glimmering, and moral chaos would soon have enveloped the world.

And just here, with these most palpable, time-long, and world-wide facts before us, say what in the name of common sense or sanity are we to make of the smooth theorizings, never bolder than in these days, that man without divine interposition developed his own religion from a state of primeval savagery, nay, from being a gibbering beast of the woods, whose remote ancestry can be traced to the lowest forms of animal life? If you encounter a rare absurdity, said an ancient, you may be sure it was uttered by some philosopher. If he said that in his haste then, he might say it at his leisure now. The plain and palpable truth is that, instead of growing from primeval savagery to Christian civilization, men fell from primeval purity into savagery, and have risen to what we see by dint of repeated and very emphatic interpositions of the Divinity.

Such an interposition was now needed, and was destined to be made through Abraham. If men were to be allowed to multiply, and idols to multiply, and if Gospel lights were burning dim, and one after another going out, some protective means must be taken to save the Gospel from extinction, and tide the world onward to the advent of its Redeemer in the fulness of the times. This was done by the call of Abraham and by the segregation of that part of his race in whose line the Messiah was to come. After due providential preparation

and stern preliminary discipline, a ritual wall of partition was to be reared around them to protect the oracles of God; to be thrown down in due time when the Deliverer came, that Gospel truth and life in full flood might overflow the whole world.

II. From Abraham's times we now pass to Abraham's Call. It was a most eventful era. Immense issues lay in its womb; not for Abraham personally, or for his race nationally considered, which were comparatively minor interests, but for all the world and for all time.

How Abraham's mind opened to the evils of idolatry, even in the comparatively pure and simple form in which it was retained in his paternal home, we have no means of knowing; but it may be permitted us to conjecture that he gave early indication of those high elements of spiritual character which could find no pabulum in image-worship, but prompted him "to seek the Lord if haply he might feel after him and find him," and which soon ripened into the sublimest faith ever attained by mere man. Each branch of his descendants, the Hebrews and the Arabians, have a cherished tradition on this point, which, though possibly fanciful, is not devoid of verisimilitude. It is thus given in the Koran: "When night overshadowed him, Abraham saw a star, and said, 'This is my Lord;' but when it set, he said, 'I like not those that set.' And when he saw the moon rising, he said, 'This is my Lord;' but when the moon declined, he said, 'Verily, if my Lord direct me not in the right way, I shall be as one of those who err.' And when he saw the sun rising, he said, 'This is my Lord, for this is greater than stars or moon;' but when the sun went down, he said, 'O my people, I am clear of these things! I turn my face to Him who made both heaven and earth.'" There were no doubt moral and spiritual adaptations—be this tradition true or false—which preceded and vindicated the selection of Abraham for his Messianic dignity and mission.

To the eye of his contemporaries, accustomed to such wanderings, a more unimportant and commonplace event there could not be than for Abraham to set out leisurely from Ur for some yet undetermined destination; and yet it gave shape to all history, inwove itself into all providence, and enwrapped those wonders of redemption which shall engage the attention of all worlds through eternal ages. Need we wonder that an event so memorable should be so often referred to through the entire course of the sacred Scriptures.

Nor can we doubt that the call came in a manner worthy of its intense significance. It was no mere prompting, impression, or vivid dream, but as Stephen's expression, "the God of glory," would seem to intimate, a resplendent vision. And it was a call that was repeated. It came first to him in Ur in the general form of a command to quit his country and kin, with promise of world-wide blessing, but with no indication as yet *whither*, beyond a probable beckoning westward; so that he literally went out, "not knowing whither he went." It came to him again in Haran when he had lingered five years, and where his father died; at this time, doubtless, with express mention of Canaan. To Canaan accordingly he went, probably in the line of the Jabbok, and struck into it at Sichem, its finest and most fertile region. There a third time God appeared to him, and at length expressly said to him, "Unto thy seed will I give this land;" to which the patriarch devoutly responded by building an altar unto the Lord. His subsequent journeyings southward, first to Bethel, thence under pressure of famine to Egypt, then back to Hebron and Mamre as his more permanent encampment, with renewed visions and promises, need not now be traced. Such was the repeated call. Note,

1. Its *authoritative urgency*. It was God Himself that appeared in a way that left in Abraham's mind no room for doubt. As "the God of glory" He doubtless appeared in glory. And the terms of the call are express, "Get thee out, get thee out,"

with marked and reiterative emphasis. This of itself was enough, had this been all. But Abraham had more than a bare and peremptory command; for note,

2. Its *encouraging purport*. It was a command with promise; and what a promise! A great nation, a great name, blessing to himself, blessing to his race, blessing to those that blest him and them, and better than all, "Thou shalt be a blessing; in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." God may send us on rough but never on unblessed ways. Not the fifth commandment only, but all the ten are commandments with promise. "In the keeping of God's commandments is great reward." All His "ways are pleasantness, and all his paths are peace." Our course may be through a wilderness, but it has Canaan beyond. Strait may be the gate, and the way narrow, but it leads to life everlasting.

3. Its *necessity* in view of the times. Apart from its high redemptive ends, Abraham's call had an important meaning, as a summons to shake himself free from social ties that had become inwoven with idolatry. He and his were to be a living protest against the rapidly deepening abomination; they were to be a temple and a shrine for the One Living and True God. To be this with effect they must stand outside the evil, at clear arm's length from it, unentangled by its customs, untainted by its breath.

So, in like case, must we. To preserve the purity of the faith against the killing contagion of Papal Rome, the Waldenses heard God's providential call, and retired to the Alpine valleys. Luther and his brother reformers had to do the same. Puritans and Seceders heard God's imperative summons to quit even Protestant churches that had grown corrupt; as Wesleyans and others have had also to do when their respective communions had become tyrannical, or had departed from the simplicity of the Gospel. So from time to time must it inevitably be. Let the best and last be done to reform a communion while in it;

but should this be in vain, then leave it; and on their heads, not yours, will the sin of schism remain.

On the same principle the sinner ought to hear God's call to him in the Gospel, to step out from the world by faith, and become one of God's called, one of God's elect. The Gospel call to the sinner, the call to glory to the believer, both find illustration in the call of Abraham, and are based on the same eternal principle of purity and right. "Arise, flee for thy life." "Love not the world, neither the things of the world." "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. vi. 14-18).

4. Its *principle*—reiterative, progressive, here a little, and there a little more; "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear;" first the dawn and the morning ascent, before the full splendour of noon. God's first call to Abraham in Ur said so much; his next in Haran said more; and those in Canaan yet more, at each time more. God gave him portions in due season, as he could bear. To have told him all at first might have done harm. So did Christ with His disciples, being tender of the frail vessels. So did God with His successive revelations to the world, dispensing them "at sundry times and

in divers manners." And so does He with individual man at this hour; as all along. He gives us sufficient for present duty; not too little, to leave us in doubt, but also not too much, to supersede our own mental activity. He thus leads us and develops us, enlightens, enlivens, and strengthens us at one and the same time. If we obey, fresh light will be given us; if not, not. It is thus that "to him that hath shall be given, while from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have." If God calls, follow; presume not to say, Let me first know the end, and every stage between. When God says, "Forward!" then forward; and fresh instructions will be given you, and fresh strength imparted.

Anxious sinner! does a good godward thought start within you? Follow its leading; and ten more good thoughts and fifty more relieving experiences will spring up on your onward path. Backslider! does the thought, "*Return!*" start up within you? Then return, for that thought is God's call; and each step will quicken the next, as new calls to keep on returning and new hopes greet you like angels, and the distant sound of home-welcoming melodies are borne on your ear. Young man, struggling with some fleshly lust, does the thought, "Rise up against it, and kill it!" start within you? Then do it; and you will be astonished to find how many good thoughts and noble ambitions of the like kind will come flocking to your help, and how easy and sure the triumph will be as you persist in good earnest in the spiritually emancipating work. Here is a Scripture rule for you, and an example as well: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let

us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (Phil. iii. 12-16).

III. From Abraham's times, and Abraham's call, let us now turn in the last place to Abraham's Faith. It was a great deal that was asked of him; for it was not himself only that was to migrate but his aged father as well, who must have been aged indeed, considering that Abraham himself was already seventy years old; in fact, we know from the history that Terah, now within five years of his death, had at this time the weight of two entire centuries on his venerable head. Him, and the others, and all the flocks and herds, Abraham had to set in motion as well as himself, and that too without having as yet the least idea of his ultimate destination. He literally "went out, not knowing whither he went." But, like Saul of Tarsus in a similar case, Abraham was "not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

We can imagine Terah's objections, his remonstrances, his oft-expressed and downright determination not to move a step; like old Anchises, who persisted in remaining to perish in the flames of burning Troy, till his heroic son took him on his shoulders and bore him away. We all know, many of us have seen in our own circles, how inflexibly old people cling to the home, however homely, where they have spent their best days. Terah would say, Go yourself, if you will and must, but leave me here to die. But Terah had to bow to the overmastering power of Abraham's invincible faith.

Behold them at length in motion, their immense droves under shepherds in front; those with young, lame or tender, following under other servants; asses and camels bearing women and children, and loads of baggage in the next rank, and Abraham riding from one part to another supervising the whole.

Their rate of motion was slow, their halts many, as pasture and water might determine. Imagine the unharnessing of camels, unpacking of baggage, erection of tent poles and haircloth coverings at each successive stage; but not in these lay the real difficulties of the enterprise. They lay in the severance of home ties. Behind Abraham were home, with its endearing memories, and the tombs of his fathers; before him a cheerless blank, the wide wide world, and the prospect of peril or dubious welcome among the tents of the stranger. But his faith triumphed over all. In this as in the promise to Sarah "he hoped against hope." In this, as in that greatest trial to his faith of all, the command to offer up his only son, his faith victoriously bore up, knowing that Omnipotence was on his side, and that all should be made to work together for good.

The patriarch's experience in all this was representative and typical. Many since, Abraham-like, have in fidelity to God and his truth, and in obedience to his providential call, left country and kin, and gone forth, not knowing whither they went. Thus acted the Puritans. To them Queen Elizabeth had proved a very tigress, as did also her successor James. "Harry them out of the land," was his call, which drove them first to Holland and thence to America, carrying with them the noble sentiments of their pastor, John Robinson: "I charge you before God that ye follow me no further than I have been a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has more truth yet to break out of his Holy Word." He then laments that so many Protestant Churches stopped short at Luther and Calvin, instead of going on towards perfection, and solemnly charged them to go valiantly onward wherever truth led. The apostolic man, who remained behind with the church in Holland, knelt on the beach and prayed as the vessel bore away to England, prior to the final departure of the pilgrim fathers for America. At Plymouth they gave leave to the fainthearted to quit. Thus, as an American poet says:—

“God had sifted three kingdoms to find the wheat for His planting,
Then had sifted the wheat as the living seed of a nation.”

Forth went those pilgrim fathers, a hundred noble souls, in the *Mayflower*, in the year 1620. The very elements were pitiless. After a stormy voyage, and just before landing, they solemnly covenanted and combined themselves into a civil body to frame just and equal laws, and submit themselves thereto, in the fear of God. But O! what tongue can tell the privations and sufferings that awaited them as they landed on that Plymouth Rock, which they so named from the English port they had left, and there knelt and prayed for God's help to fulfil a mission, the grandeur and extent of which at the time they but little realized,—to form a New England, and with it a New World! Winter had set in with fell rigour. The sea-spray, as they rowed, froze on their clothes, and made them hard as boards. Long and weariedly did they wade knee-deep in the snow to find where to settle down. Food failed. Sickness struck them down. In their own simple but expressive words, the men were often seen “to stagger by reason of faintness for want of food.” At one time the daily allowance to each was only five kernels of corn, to which they might add fish if they were able to catch them. Four years passed before they had any cattle. Such was the course of trial and discipline appointed them. Through all this they passed, and endured for conscience' sake and the Gospel's; all being sweetened by the consideration that it was dared and endured at God's call. And a noble hope inspired them. “Out of small beginnings,” said one of them, “great things have been produced, and as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone to many.” And from England there came back to them the words of good cheer: “Let it not be grievous to you that you have been instruments to break the ice for others. This honour shall be yours to the world's end.”

This was an Abraham-like call, met with an Abraham-like faith, and crowned with an Abraham-like grandeur of result. Let us follow the noble band "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Then, "watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong." Let not the shield of faith be vilely cast away.

Many lessons here crowd in upon us, pertaining both to the domains of Providence and of Grace. It is only a snatch or two we can afford to submit under each.

In the Providential sphere we live in pre-eminently mutable and migratory times. The approximatively perfect knowledge now attained of all lands, under all zones, and the ever-progressive inventiveness evinced in means of communication, and the ever-imperious call,

"Come, swift Improvement, on the car of *Time*,"

under the influence of which oceans have practically shrunk into the merest fraction of their former dimensions, these and other influences have multiplied providential calls, analogous to those given to Abraham, to young and adventurous spirits to go forth even to antipodal regions, and there cultivate and replenish them, and found mighty nations yet to be. From small germinal beginnings teeming populations are fast over-spreading boundless and solitary wilds, whose very existence was till lately unknown. The more these modern movements are contemplated in the light of their own manifest unfoldings, and in the steadily advancing light of the important providential evolutions they are predestined to subserve, the more numerous and striking will be the points of parallelism they present to the call of Abraham and its momentous and

world-wide results. Like him, our modern adventurers go forth to experiences they little realize, and to develop a future they as yet little know. In them, as in him, "the little one becomes a thousand, and the small one a strong nation." In their case, as in his, there is a divine call too articulate to be mistaken; and if like him they only recognize and accept the providential summons as emanating from God, by embarking on their several lines of enterprise in the spirit of faith, of prayer, and of a lofty instinct of duty, like him they will be directed, protected, and borne victorious through it all. In these lines of thought will be found abundant consolation to parents parting with their loved ones, and to these loved ones animation and noble impulses in prosecuting their venturesome careers.

In the domain of Grace, Abraham's call directly suggests the call brought to us in the Gospel, to turn our back on this wicked world, yea, if need be, to "forsake even father and mother," and set forth as citizens of heaven, with our faces thitherward. Believers are often, in the New Testament, designated God's "called" and God's "chosen," and both designations, which are frequently mentioned together, find important elucidation from analogous relations in Old Testament history. It is manifest on the face of inspired language that, in addition to the first and direct call of the Gospel to sinners, "to all men everywhere," there is another and special call which comes to believers—a call to "holiness," and through holiness to "glory." This, and other Old Testament phrases, originally applied to the ancient theocracy which was typical throughout, will be found transferred and spiritually applied to the New Testament church, as by others, so very notably by the apostle Peter, in his first epistle (ii. 9-11), where he describes believers as "called out of darkness into God's marvellous light." As Abraham was called out of Chaldea to fulfil a high and holy destiny and attain a glorious reward; as Israel was in like manner, and for similar ends, called out of the land of

bondage—and hence we read, “Out of Egypt have I called my son,”—so in the spiritual sense, every believer is called to make good his separation from this evil world and thus make his “calling and election sure.” This he responds to, Abraham-like, by faith; yea, faith is the means by which, on the human side, this separating process is effected. As in Abraham’s case, so in his, repeated calls will come, and enlarged views will open before him, encouraging him to “walk by faith and not by sight,” and assuring him of eventual and superabundant reward. “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John ii. 15-17).





XII.

ABRAHAM—TABERNACLING IN HOPE.

The next illustration of faith is still furnished by Abraham. So massive an example could well bear to be broken into parts. Nor is this the only one more. Others are yet to follow; and the last to be named from the life of Abraham, isolated item though it be, towers in magnitude above most faiths that have ever embodied themselves in action throughout the course of the ages.

In the previous case, just considered, Abraham's faith proved potent enough to disengage him from the strong ties of home and kin, and to draw him westward to a land that could by no possibility have any magnetic pull on him; for at first he did not even know what it was, and it was not till after successive revelations that he came to know more definitely about it, and his own interest in it. In the case before us we find the patriarch at last in Canaan, and in possession of the Divine promise that made it over to him and his. But in what circumstances do we find him in Canaan? The answer is given in the words under our eye; and if only pains be taken to realize their deep and long-drawn significance, they will be found to exhibit a faith tested by as severe and prolonged a strain as could well be experienced by mortal man:—"By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (ver. 9, 10).

Two things here stand out in bold relief: Abraham lived in Canaan the life, not of a settler, but of a sojourner; and this he was enabled to do, and to persist in, by dint of his faith.

I. Abraham "sojourned;" the word is expressive. It well represents the original, which denotes to dwell *alongside* of others; in contrast to another compound of the same verb which means to settle *down*, as in a permanent home, as may be seen in the original of Acts vii. 5. To him it was "the land of promise." By the best and most indefeasible of rights, by a true "right divine,"—that much-paraded claim "true only here"—all Canaan was his. And yet, "though he came to his own," he did not assert his own. He was content to "sojourn in it as in a strange country"—not simply as a stranger in a strange land, but as a stranger in his own land. Instead of settling down among the Canaanites, and setting up a rule over them, he dwelt alongside of them, among them, but not of them. He found them masters of the soil in their respective centres and systems of constituted rule, and with noble humility and courtesy he "rendered to every one his due, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." He founded neither city nor mansion, but pitched his tent where he chose, and struck it when he chose, his only erection wherever he sojourned, and one he never failed to rear, being an earthen altar to his God. In this manner "he dwelt in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob." Contemporaneously speaking he did so, for though he had to drag out wearily and drearily a full century of wandering life before the child of promise appeared, he was privileged to live with that son over three-quarters of another century (more than the allotted life-span now), and even with his grandson Jacob fifteen years. But the dominant and proper idea evidently is, that, like as Abraham dwelt in tents, so in their turn did his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob. They were "co-heirs" (so stands it in the original) of the same promise, and they were destined to have their faith tested by the same lingering experience. To

them, even as to him, and for generations yet to come, they had no foothold whatever in their own God-given land, except what served them for a grave. As Stephen graphically puts it, "He gave him (Abraham) none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on; yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child" (Acts vii. 5). William the Conqueror preluded his invasion with a formal claim to the English land. Harold defiantly replied that, if he came over, he should have a couple of yards of it—for a grave. No such grim amenities passed between Abraham and the people of Canaan. When he needed a grave he bowed courteously before the children of Heth, and weighed out the price for it to generous limits, altogether irrespective of the divine grant. He had been divinely told, in the successive revelations, that "the cup of the Amorites was not yet full," and that generations must therefore elapse ere the grant should translate itself into possession. His rightful position, then, over the entire term of his own and immediately succeeding lifetimes, was that of a sojourner, and he and his patriarchal co-heirs deported themselves accordingly as patterns of high manhood, as heroes of faith.

What a contrast to the too common rule with those who prefer claims to territories on the alleged strength of right divine. An English Pope, Adrian the Fourth, granted by pretended right divine the kingdom of Ireland to an English king, as the basis of immediate invasion, devastation, and ruthless domination. When the Norman invader set foot on our shores, he took care to seize and fortify such heights as Windsor, that might command the surrounding plains. To take cities, or build them, and wall them up to heaven, has been the immemorial practice in such cases since the days of Nimrod, who reared "Babel, in the land of Shinar," and other fenced cities; "out of which land went forth Asshur and builded Nineveh," and its sisterhood of strong centres (Gen. x. 9-12). These were

prototypes and samples of actors and of methods destined in coming ages to make up the great bulk of human history. Abraham and his family acted as unlike to all that as possible. He moved leisurely from place to place, as Providence directed, lingering in Haran till the death of his father Terah (Gen. xi. 31; Acts vii. 4), and thence westward to the promised land. He was sufficiently long at the different encampments to be correctly denominated a "sojourner," but not so long, even at the longest, as to be entitled to the name of "dweller." His various encampments may be traced, in the general view, from Haran to Shechem, where he first pitched his tent in the land of promise. Thence he moved southward to Bethel, and yet further southward to Hebron, whence, on occasion, he passed into the adjoining countries, especially Egypt, and retained in them all the same position of a nomadic stranger and sojourner, prosperous in circumstances, venerable in character, even formidable in prowess, but this last only for the rescue and enrichment of others, and himself all the while sceptreless and landless in a country which the solemn promise of the Most High had made his own.

II. The sustaining principle which bore up Abraham and his co-heirs through those weary sojournings was Faith. "By faith," says the sacred writer, he did so; and the ulterior mark of his faith and hope is mentioned as being a celestial state and polity far above and beyond the proudest embodiment of earthly empire, a city unseen whose architect and artificer was the eternal God.

The object of Abraham's faith was, of course, the Divine promise, which from the first contained in it all the fulness of Messianic blessing, and which was renewed with gracious amplification and confirmation from time to time. Christ and his salvation, the core of these promises, the patriarch, as we read in this very chapter, "saw afar off." "Your father Abraham," said Jesus, "rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was

glad" (John viii. 56). So pregnant were the promises of blessing to the whole world in and through Abraham's seed, that the patriarch could not fail to see that the Divine covenant with him concerned redemptive arrangements which not only pertained to him as an individual, and to his offspring as a nation, but also to the whole world of human-kind. For himself, Abraham believed that Gospel, and "his faith was counted unto him for righteousness"—not that his faith was his righteousness, but that *practically* it was, because it grasped in Jesus the divinely-gifted propitiatory righteousness, on the ground of which alone any sinner could be saved. And this personal acceptance of Abraham for Christ's sake, and not for his own works, occurred before the circumcisional badge was appointed which should segregate his descendants as the favoured nation; and it thus occurred at that prior period for the express purpose of foreclosing all ambiguity in regard to his relation as spiritual father, and that of his Messianic seed as Saviour, to all whom it might concern throughout all the families of the human race. Hence the apostle's argumentation, which we simply quote, and that at some length, as precious evangelical verities which we cannot here expound, but which will shine by their own light. After stating, in the opening verses of Rom. iv., that Abraham attained to justification not by works but by faith, and after quoting in proof the pregnant testimony above noticed, that instead of *working* for a righteousness, he *believed* for a righteousness ("Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness"); and yet further, after citing the confirmatory testimony of David to the same effect in the thirty-second Psalm, the apostle thus proceeds to build up his great evangelical argument:—"Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he

received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed: not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were: who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now, it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 9-25).

In the same manner, and to the same effect, Paul says to the

Galatians: "He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. iii. 5-14). Then, after some explanations of the true bearing of the Sinaitic dispensation,—which did not, and indeed could not disannul the world-embracing covenant of promise made in Christ with Abraham, for the benefit of the whole world, four hundred and thirty years before,—the apostle goes on to say: "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under

a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (ver. 21-29).

Abraham's faith in this Gospel enabled him, in respect to all his own interests whether in the present or the future, to possess his soul in the unruffled calm of serenity and peace. He clearly saw that God had gracious purposes, to take effect in his line, the sweep and significance of which immeasurably transcended the personal interests of himself and his natural seed. Divine wisdom had already revealed to him that generations should yet elapse till these dispensational arrangements should take national shape. What was he, meanwhile, and what were his immediate descendants and co-heirs, to weigh their personal desires and likings against vast interests like these? They might not see far into the underlying wisdom of that long period of delay. They did not require to see far into this, for their business was to believe, and to trust God where they could not trace Him. Even as it was, they had glimpses. They had been told that Canaan's cup was not yet full. They could feel that wholesome discipline, fitted to wean them more and more from an outlying idolatrous world, was a precious boon to them not only personally, but to sublime themselves and their descendants all the more into characteristics appropriate to their high and holy mission. Perhaps also it might occur to them that their long wanderings in the land which should in due time belong to their descendants would hallow this and that spot where they had pitched their tent and reared their altars to the Lord, and intensify, by such associations, its title to be designated the Holy Land. Above all, as patriarchs in whose line was to come the Messiah, and the

Messiah for the whole world, it was meet that they should bequeath to all ages and nations inspiring examples of that faith which "worketh by love," "purifieth the heart," and "overcometh the world."

To men who stood accepted in the Beloved, it was a small matter what might be meted out to them in this transitory world. Hence, long as their lives in some cases were, "they looked" above and beyond, "for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker was God." We stay not a moment to confute, or even to protest, against that brutish notion (for what better name does it deserve?), though backed by high prelatial authority, that the sanctions of Old Testament morality are limited to the present life. Every vision of God, not to name Enoch's translation, nay, every precept and promise made to man, declare or imply it, while often in express terms it is exhibited as in all ages the hope of the godly. It lies in the depths of our moral nature, from which have emanated, even among the heathen, "this pleasing hope, this fond desire, this longing after immortality." That it was the ancient Jewish belief is not only taught in the Bible, but may be amply seen in uninspired Jewish writings, such as Philo and the Apocrypha. In the case before us, we venture to say that it is impossible to make coherent sense out of the apostle's statements and reasonings if the ancients he is here describing did not look forward to the heavenly state after death in substantially the same sense as that in which Christians do so now.

Under the aspect of a city the heavenly state is exhibited in familiar passages of great beauty and expressiveness—none more so than in the description of the holy city in Rev. xxi. Into these various portions, and into questions of detail, we cannot here afford to enter. It may suffice to say that, as a city, the heavenly state, whether its locality be here or elsewhere, is not only a place, but a polity, a constituted kingdom of glory, and as such a centre of privilege and duty, and a seat

of holy solemnities. "As the heavenly sanctuary," says a German expositor, "is one not made with hands, but pitched by God himself (Ileb. viii. 2), to be the archetype of the sanctuary on earth, so the heavenly city here is a formation and building of God, and an archetype of that earthly city which God had once so favoured with His presence, and to which the hearts of the readers of this epistle still so dangerously clung. God is its 'builder' as having laid down its plan, and its 'maker' as having framed it accordingly" (Delitzsch *in loc.*).

This heavenly city was the remoter object of Abraham's faith and hope. And having such a faith, he was content. "He that believeth shall not make haste." Abraham did not snatch at its premature realization in Canaan. He made no attempt to build cities; he was content with pole and curtain. Had he made such an attempt, he would have acted like Israel against Amalek, and with the same disastrous result. It was God that was Architect and Artificer in all those redemptive arrangements, and not he. The true heavenly city, of God's own planting, of God's own construction—that alone had foundations—literally "the foundations"—the definite article being here used to denote emphasis. Everything earthly is marked with change; the heavenly city shall stand for evermore.

The lesson to those Palestinian Christians was, not to cling too closely by the ancient city and temple, holy and venerable as their associations were; for they were not the heavenly city, the time for which had not yet come. Amid the fast-gathering tokens of the Roman doom, let them look beyond the Jerusalem that now is to the celestial city which alone hath "the foundations"—foundations deep as the Eternal Counsels, insubvertible as Omnipotence. Abraham-like, they might have wandering days before them; let them, like Abraham, hold firm and fast by the Gospel truth, come what may; and look beyond all the shifting scenes and vicissitudes of earth, to the Eternal City, whose builder and maker is God.



XIII.

S A R A H.

Under the gigantic shadow of Abraham is next introduced the minor yet interesting figure of Sarah; with which, as the sacred writer proceeds, that of Abraham becomes interblended. "Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea-shore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. xi. 11-13). The force of the expression "herself" has been variously explained, but the simplest view of its significance is that which commends itself to us as the best. It seems equivalent to "Sarah in like manner;" that is, Sarah, too, in her own measure, no less than Abraham, believed in the Divine promise, and their common faith was crowned with a joint and appropriate reward. It is as if he had said, Let not the full-orbed blaze of Abraham's faith totally eclipse, to our view, the faith of his like-minded wife Sarah. She, too, believed, and as she shared in the faith she shared in the joy. Let us first take note of her faith, and then of its result.

I. In contemplating Sarah and her Faith we cannot evade

the intermediate shadow of her failings. These, after all, were of small account compared with the aggregate of her life-long faith, integrity, and devotion. When we think of her falls, let us also think of her trials. She was the loyal and loving partner of a patriarch to whom had been given promises as great as their fulfilment to himself personally had hitherto been small. She had shared his exile, his wanderings, his occasional dangers. It on two different occasions she uses liberty with the truth, it is humiliating to add that she not only sinned in company with her husband Abraham, but at his instigation. She was, therefore, the minor transgressor of the two; and what yet further palliates her guilt, she consented to prevaricate in both cases to save her husband's life. One of these cases was when he went down to Egypt, and, dreading the impression likely to be made on Pharaoh by Sarah, now in all the attractions of her prime, persuaded her to pass herself off as his sister instead of his wife—there being just so much truth in the averment as to furnish materials for a quibble; which quibble, moreover, was all the more to be reprehended that it sought to save Abraham's life by a resort which not only failed to save, but in effect surrendered all safeguards to Sarah's womanly honour (Gen. xii. 10-20). The other and similar case happened long after with Abimelech, king of Gerar (Gen. xx.),—so long after, that we naturally wonder how Abraham could anticipate any risk with one so old—for the incident occurred in her advanced years, not long prior to the birth of Isaac, when she had only thirty-seven years more to live. This wonder, however, abates when we assume, as we well may, that the rejuvenescence which often happens to women would be in special measure experienced by Sarah in connection with the approaching miracle that enabled her to give birth to the child of promise. The conduct of both, and especially of Abraham, contrasts most unfavourably with that of the heathen potentates concerned, Pharaoh and Abimelech, who deported themselves, on the whole, as honourable and

high-minded men. And yet, to do Abraham justice, he does not seem to have realized the intrinsic iniquity of that prevaricating policy, for he had deliberately planned it on leaving Chaldea as in his view a justifiable resort, he had repeatedly imposed it on Sarah, and he emphatically vindicated it as reconcilable with the truth. All this we seem to gather from these words of his in answer to Abimelech's reproachful challenge: "Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. And yet indeed she is my sister: she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me: at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother" (Gen. xx. 11-13). But no amount of special pleading could vindicate the evasion, as both false in intent and likely to be mischievous in result. It was unworthy of the patriarch; nor did Abimelech let them pass without the humiliation they deserved, as may be read in his words in the 16th verse, and the emphatic statement that is appended:—"Thus she was reproved."

It is here, as in so many other cases; the eminently holy men of old are found to sin in exceptional but all too conspicuous instances in ways we should antecedently pronounce to be morally impossible—in directions at the opposite pole from their characteristic virtues. Moses, the meekest of men, sins in the form of passionate fits, that excluded him from Canaan. Job, the model of patience, fretfully curses the day of his birth. David, the man after God's own heart, stoops to that complexity of crime recalled by the name of Uriah. Peter, the courageous, cowers in the presence of a maiden. Peter, in reality as well as by profession the superlatively loyal, thrice denies his Lord. John, the apostle of love, would have called down fire from heaven on an inhospitable Samaritan village.

And, in like manner, Abraham, the Coryphæus of faith and trust, the very father of the faithful, sins in the direction of faithless timidity and unmanly evasion. The lesson this brings to us all is to stand most carefully on our guard where we think we are most strong, for precisely at that point is faith apt to merge insensibly into security, and as sure as it does, Satan will there seek to take advantage. As in a fortress, if a strong side has been left to itself as safe, that the defenders may post themselves at weaker points elsewhere, at that very side the enemy will likely contrive to enter; so, if there be any side of moral character in regard to which we conclude vigilance to be unnecessary, and failure simply impossible, very probably the tempter will wriggle himself in just there, and in an unguarded moment "lay our honour in the dust." The earthquake throb may already be felt under our fancied citadel when we indulge too freely in the boast, "My mountain stands strong." "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

Another instance of Sarah's failings is to be found in her impatience at the long delay of the promised birth of the child and heir of benediction, when, by a much too common infirmity, she snatched presumptuously at modes of her own for precipitating the issue by the substitution for that end of Hagar, her Egyptian handmaid, in her place (Gen. xvi.). In this, as in all such expedients, she sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind. But even here she again sinned in company with her husband; and he himself had already indicated in some degree the same impatience in what he said about Eliezer of Damascus (Gen. xv. 2-4). We shall not do justice to either unless we take some pains to realize the exciting magnitude of the promise and the painfully long drawn-out procrastination of its fulfilment. We shall also do well to remember that one great charm and sterling value of these Scripture memorials of ancient saints consists precisely in this, that they are not portrayed

and handed down to us as mythic ideals, under which aspect they would have evoked from us little sympathy and proved to us of little use; but real men and women, sharing the common infirmities and doomed to the common lot, each walking on life's level, each fighting life's battle, and as such captivating our sympathies, and while ennobling us by their high examples, bequeathing instruction to us in their very falls.

The last case of human infirmity evinced by Sarah, that calls for notice, is that in which the three angels who had appeared to Abraham, now ninety-and-nine years old, renewed the promise of a son through Sarah as destined to be at last fulfilled in the following year. On that occasion Sarah, overhearing the announcement when in her tent, committed the double sin of incredulity, and of an evasive attempt to deny it. "And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent-door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son. Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not: for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh" (Gen. xviii. 9-15). In this offence Sarah stands alone; Abraham's faith here towering up in its normal proportions.

And yet in this, as in those other instances, how much is there in Sarah's temperament as well as circumstances to palliate those failings, or at least to make them intelligible.

She was a woman; and one, as it would appear, in whom all the feminine elements of character were highly developed. She appears to have been lively, sensitive, impulsive. What more likely to such a one, in whom hope long deferred had made the heart sick, whose husband had all but completed a century of years, and whose faith in consequence would for long intervals get languid or overlaid, than with womanly vivacity to array even laughingly the improbabilities of the case, and with the same impulsiveness, when charged with the delinquency, to attempt in one and the same effort to evade conviction and make a return to her normal faith?

For, in spite of these feelings, normal and genuine all her life long her faith undoubtedly was. She proved in a fair degree worthy of her husband and of her high destiny—and what could we say more? That in this we are not saying too much, is clear from the testimony now before us of the sacred writer in this eleventh of the Hebrews, and from the tribute paid to her with no less emphasis by another New Testament writer who ranks her among “the holy women” of the olden time “who trusted in God,” and appeals to her as a model and spiritual mother for all good and godly wives: “Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands; even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement” (1 Pet. iii. 3-6). This illumines and floods with meek glory the long conjugal career and character of Sarah, and enables us to sound all the more deeply the profundities of the patriarch’s grief when, at the age of one hundred and twenty-seven, she

was snatched from his side, "and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her" (Gen. xxiii. 2). Her incredulous laugh at the announcement of the imminency of Isaac's birth was not all incredulous, nor was the subsequent evasion all false; and it was amply condoned by the livelier laugh of faith and exultation, when the auspicious event "filled her mouth with laughter and her tongue with singing," which she embodied and perpetuated in the expressive name Isaac. "And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham that Sarah would have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age" (Gen. xxi. 6, 7). It was in this element of faith that the blessing came—the subjective condition of faith, and the needed impartation of strength to bear, keeping pace together; for though, physically, there was no causal connection between the two, morally and spiritually there was, in terms of that pervading principle of God's gracious and righteous administration, "According to your faith so shall it be done unto you."

II. From Sarah's faith let us now pass to its Result. "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea-shore innumerable" (Heb. xi. 12). These two figures of the "stars" and the "sand" are found both separately and combined. The former is thus employed in Gen. xv. 5: "And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." The latter is found in Gen. xiii. 16: "And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered." Both are used in combination in Gen. xxii. 16-18: "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord; for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing

I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies: and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." How multitudinous the seed already was, only a few centuries later, became abundantly evident, when, on the eventful occasion of the Exodus, there were found marshalled at Succoth no fewer than 600,000 fighting men (Ex. xii. 37). The subsequent indications, especially as we look forward to millennial times, baffle all computation. Israel—"the thousands of Manasseh, and the ten thousands of Ephraim," and the other tribes in proportionately teeming myriads—as yet buried out of sight in their national graves, shall one day, when the "Lo-ammi" shroud shall be uplifted from over them, emerge in numbers without number in terms of the prediction: "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered: and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel" (Hos. i. 10, 11).

The inspired writer strikingly contrasts these countless myriads with the "one" from whom they "sprang," and "him as good as dead." This, if we add to it the lapse of time during which faith was like to flag and hope to expire, was a contrast which could not escape notice, and which will impress us the more profoundly the more vividly it is realized. Nor was the observation at all singular. Repeatedly in the Old Testament are the myriads of Israel contrasted with the "one" from whom they "sprang." This contrast could by no possibility be more marked than when we reflect that this "one" mother was by

nature sterile, that even had it been otherwise she was now long past age, and that the progenitor of Israel was a century old before the child of promise appeared. This emphasising of the "one" may be seen in the following instances: "Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance" (Ezek. xxxiii. 24). "Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth" (Mal. ii. 24, 15). "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody" (Is. li. 1-3).

See, by way of closing moral, what harvests of grace and glory may spring from a single seed-corn of faith. Take any of our world-renowned reformers—Luther, Knox, or whoever else, and attempt if you can to number his spiritual children, or tabulate his life-results. The same in effect, and in all varieties of measure, may be affirmed of every believing man. From his single well, streams of hallowing and life-giving influence may descend that shall flow onward and down to the foot of the great white throne. "Such honour have all God's saints." Each may be but as a grain of salt, but even a grain of pungent salt will operate to the extent of it as an antidote to the world's

corruption. Each may be only a stray beam, but even the feeble beam may light some wanderer to safety. Be true, be trustful, be faithful, be courageous, be patient; for if these graces, and such as these, "be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."





XIV.

THE PILGRIM PATRIARCHS.

The mention in the foregoing context of the migration of Abraham and his family from Mesopotamia, and their life-long pilgrimage in Canaan, in which, though it was by divinest right their own, they had no home but a tent, no land but a grave, suggests to the sacred writer a pause, that he may take a retrospect of their position, and of the long and strong winged faith by which it was maintained. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. xi. 13-16).

In elucidating this cumulative pile of affirmations we could not do better, and indeed could hardly do other, than travel from one to the other in the order in which they are presented.

I. The opening words start the inquiry, Who are the persons meant? "These all." What all? Who? How many? Is it the totality of those mentioned in this chapter? No; for many of these have not yet been named; and even of those who have, it is obviously but a defined little group in the immediate

context to which the inspired penman here specifically refers. His main affirmations, of course, are alike applicable to all the godly; but they are here evidently made of the patriarchal group he has just mentioned, with the first of whom God inaugurated a new epoch of Gospel promise—namely, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob; and by implication also, no doubt, with as many of their respective families as participated in their faith.

II. This determined, we come now to the first thing affirmed of the little group—"these all died." Yes; long as their lives were lengthened out, the inevitable hour came at last to one and all of them: at different times, and in different ways, but alike sure; a peremptory summons not to be set at nought, a mortal warfare from which there was no discharge. So was it then; and just so is it still. Each has his little life-day—a day which has its modifiable margin, which our own free action may shorten, may lengthen, but which has at last its adamant limit, when "rest" we must, after each "has accomplished, as an hireling, his day." His little potentiality of life-force, expend it slowly or quickly, exhausts itself at last. "His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." Other forms of life have their speedy renewals. The plant may seem dead, and rudely buried under the ravage of winter, yet in reality it still lives.

"Kind nature the embryo-blossom will save;
But when shall spring visit the mouldering urn?
Ah! when will it dawn on the night of the grave?"

"There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?

As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up; so man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep" (Job xiv. 7-12).

Then, after all, it is but a "sleep," from which man shall at that long deferred time be raised. True—most true; and so the words that follow glowingly set forth. Meanwhile that distant future is overlaid by the death-shadows that envelop the present, and too absorbingly complexion all. The ancient and the honourable, the props, the ornaments, and the bulwarks of all that is great and good come at last, with the virtues that ennobled them, to be indiscriminately embraced in the brief sententious memento—"these all died." The men who have reaped with the sword the great battle-fields of time, and laurelled their brows with all that was deathliest, and called it immortality, have had to follow their own victims, and fall with unwreathed heads into the dust before the one grim King that has never yet been conquered.

"The garlands wither on your brow;
Then boast no more your mighty deeds
Lo, on Death's purple altar now,
See where the victor-victim bleeds!"

Ye vaunted thunderbolts of war, ye but tame one another. Ye are but potsherds of the earth that dash each other to pieces when the breath of ambition blows into tempest the great sea of multitudes, and nations, and peoples, and tongues, and makes your vessels of state toss and founder on the tumultuous tide. A narrow isthmus of years at most stands between victor and vanquished. The subjugator of a continent must, equally with the meanest, capitulate to a mightier than he—to the sole universal Conqueror that has hitherto borne sway over the earth.

"These all died." How simple the words, yet how solemn!

They are easily uttered; and precisely such words, in fact, are used by us daily; and yet what a wealth of humiliating and instructive meaning do they convey. They are the echo of the oft-recurring expression in the fifth of Genesis—"and he died." In that ancient register, however long the world's gray fathers are successively described as living—in some cases, as in that of Adam and Methuselah, verging on a thousand years—the stern record, with one exception, falls to be made of every one of them—"and he died." And just to show how those portions of Scripture which we are tempted to neglect as useless, may be endued with life-giving potency, we may refer to the case of an undecided young man who was actually converted and drawn to God by means of that very phrase, the oft-repeated recurrence of which in that fifth of Genesis, in connection even with lifetimes so vastly prolonged, roused him to salutary and soul-saving reflection on death, duty, and destiny. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

III. We advance to a word or two more of inexpressible sweetness and significance:—"These all died *in faith*." Say not the theme is gloomy. Solemnity is not gloom. In truth the gloomiest of all realities is that of rational and mortal men pacing jauntily towards the tremendous necessity of death and the eternal judgment beyond, with but comparatively few earnest thoughts thereanent. They are a pilgrim train, all in motion, no break, no pause. Even when sleep numbs every sense, and laps it in oblivion, even to apparent suspension of life, there is no suspension of the pilgrim march. Onward it fares, onward evermore. What! with no regard to that waving line of precipice, steep, deep, and awful, that meets some sooner than others? None; even nearing that tremendous verge, they must speed onward, yea, and *over*. On that brink we look down on an abyss more tremendous than any Alpine gorge. Shades of portentous mystery welter voluminously far below; birds of evil

omen dive into it, soar out of it, and scream wildly overhead; solemn sounds murmur upward from the unknown deep.

"I hear the helpless wail, the shriek of woe,
I see the muddy wave, the dreary shore;
The sluggish streams that slowly creep below,
Where mortals enter and return no more."

How is this terror to be met? In one or other of these three ways. First, you may wink hard at the whole matter, and march forward to it with your head wrapt in a cloud, and your senses steeped in the opiate of wilful oblivion. This, it is needless to say, is the most wretched and ignominious expedient of all. Or, secondly, you may go forward to it bravely on the strength of mere stoical self-determination in the stony apathy of despair. Or, thirdly, and best of all, you may go forward to it armed and winged with Christian faith. In this case you fall not hopelessly down the verge; you do not even fly over it, but, like the eagle that makes its sweep from the dizzy cliff, if for the moment it seems to descend it is but for a moment; straightway it is seen to soar and sun itself in the beams of noon. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." Such virtue lies in the addendum—"in faith." Attached to the statement, "these all died," it appears like a flower blooming on a grave, neutralizing by its sweet fragrance the noisome loathsomeness of death. Here we have light amid the darkness, hope amid the wreck of hopes, joy in the midst of sorrow, life amid death.

"Lo! darkness and doubt are now flying away;
No longer I roam in conjecture forlorn:
So breaks on the traveller, faint and astray,
The bright and the balmy effulgence of morn.
See Truth, Love, and Mercy in triumph descending,
And nature all glowing in Eden's first bloom;
On the cold cheek of death smiles and roses are blending,
And beauty immortal awakes from the tomb."

Here, in this word "faith," following the word "died," we have life in the midst of death, life in spite of death, life through and beyond death, life for evermore.

That fifth chapter of Genesis already alluded to ushers us, as it were, into the vast grave-yard of antiquity, where the hoary fathers of the ancient world sleep side by side. There we find one cenotaph or empty tomb, and only one—a solitary exception that only the more strikingly serves to prove the rule of universal mortality—we mean the monumental stone of Enoch, bearing the simple and sublime inscription, "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." And thus, over that general grave-yard of antiquity, we may see inscribed on its portal the words, "These all DIED." But the chapter before us, this eleventh of Hebrews, ushers us, so to speak, into an inner inclosure, a spot of peculiar consecration, where the sunbeam loves to rest, and the grass waves with a fresher green. It, too, includes that cenotaph or empty tomb of Enoch: his remains, too, are there; not *mortal* remains, for none such has he left, but *historic* remains, which pre-eminently class him among that select and holy band. There, in that inner spot of special sacredness, in the hollow of God's hand, their very dust precious in His sight, sleep the elder born of "the household of faith," the great and the good of the olden time; and their memorials, each commencing with the words "by faith," may be seen graved legibly, as with a pen of iron on their tombstones; while over the portal of that inner inclosure may be seen the motto, longer than the other, containing not merely the words, "These all DIED," but the vastly more significant and spirit-stirring words, "These all died IN FAITH."

Surely, if there be a spark of spiritual earnestness in our nature, it will be our loftiest ambition to take rank in this company. A great writer says, in connection with Nelson's death at Trafalgar, "The most triumphant death is that of the martyr; the most awful that of the martyr patriot; the most

splendid that of the hero in the hour of victory; and if the chariot and the horses of fire had been vouchsafed for Nelson's translation, he could scarcely have departed in a brighter blaze of glory." We cannot confess to much sympathy with that train of remark. It demands some effort of us to associate the cherubic chariot and horses with that category of scenes. We can admit, in certain cases of last resort, the sad alternative of war. We can also admit the heroism and the many self-renouncing attributes of the martial virtues. But on one side, if not on both, war must ever be a crime drawing down the curse of Cain; and the roar of battle and the blaze of burning towns we regard as congenial sights not for angels but for devils to look upon. We associate "the chariots of God and the horsemen thereof" with a far other scene—the death-bed of a saint, if that saint should be but a mendicant Lazarus. We have therefore but little sympathy to spare for "the pomp and circumstance of glorious war." We much prefer the sentiment of a godly herald of the cross, who expressed himself to the following effect: However different be the choices, aspirations, and pursuits of life, you seldom hear much difference as to the kind of death men wish to die. Do we hear men say, Let me die the death of a hero? Not often. Do we hear them say, Let me die the death of the philosopher? Hardly. Do we hear them say, Let me die the death of the statesman? No. Do we hear them say, Let me die the death of the millionaire? Never. But where is the man who is not ready to exclaim, Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his. These ancient patriarchs died in the faith in which they lived; and they lived in the faith in which they died. Yes, if we would die in the faith, we must be careful to be in the faith before we die. If we would be among the blessed dead who die in the Lord, we must be among the wise and obedient living who live in the Lord.

IV. The next affirmation made of these pilgrim patriarchs

is, that they had "not received the promises." In the 17th verse we are told that Abraham "*had* received the promises." This looks like a point-blank contradiction; but the explanation is easy. As in many similar cases, the word promise may mean, either the promise strictly considered, or the object or thing promised. Thus the word "*grace*," or *favour*, may either mean the sentiment of free benignity in the mind, or the embodiment of that sentiment in some tangible gift. In like manner, the word "*hope*" may mean either the sentiment itself or the blessing hoped for as the object of that sentiment. Even the word *sorrow*, though generally restricted to the inner feeling, may be used to express the external object which evokes it; as when Milton says of his drowned companion:

"Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas, your *sorrow*, is not dead."

"Your sorrow:" that is, the object of your sorrow; the young friend whose loss you deplore. Just so here. In verse 17 the promises are to be taken in the strict promissory sense; in which sense they were things which Abraham had already received: whereas, in the verse before us the self-same word "promises" is used to denote their object, namely, the actual favours or blessings promised, in which sense neither Abraham nor the other patriarchs had yet received them. For what were these blessings? Canaan, a multitudinous seed, nay, everlasting salvation, and in his line the Saviour, in whom all nations were to be blessed. Observe, the sacred penman does not say promise, but "promises;" and the reason is, that God's promise to Abraham in Gen. xii., in calling him out of Chaldea, was reiterated and expanded at subsequent periods to Abraham himself, and renewed in similar terms to Isaac and Jacob. These we need not enter into now. Whatever questions may be raised on details, this much is beyond question, that in these promises Abraham and the other patriarchs saw Jesus and

a full and free salvation in Him—saw a glorious heaven to be reached through a better righteousness than their own. This is evident from the purport of the promises themselves; and were there any doubt on the subject it is completely dispelled by the express testimony of the New Testament in places without number, as when Jesus says, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad," and again numerous reasonings of Paul to the Romans, to the Galatians, and to the Hebrews in the very chapter before us; all which were but an echo of his preachings, as when, in the synagogue of the Pisidian Antioch he identifies the glad tidings he was declaring with the promise made to the fathers, as having been fulfilled in the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus; or as when, to his countrymen in Rome, he said, "For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." These are but a specimen of numberless texts which demonstrate that by the promises here mentioned we are simply to understand the patriarchal Gospel—whatever else they may have included being all related thereto. To them, just as to us, the Gospel is the grand object of faith—it is the ground on which faith rests—the material on which it works. Faith always implies a testimony in one form or other. Whatever pretended faith exercises itself independently of a testimony may be presumption or superstition, but it is not faith. Those patriarchs, then, equally with us, had a Gospel to believe, with Christ for its central and vital theme: but in two respects, how great was the difference between us and them! First, how dim and scanty was their Gospel compared with ours; and, secondly, how dim and feeble, generally speaking, is our faith compared with theirs! Ah, let us see to it that they rise not up in the judgment to condemn us; for to whom much is given of them shall much be required! How their faith manifested itself and operated its effects, we have only to prosecute our course along the verse to see.

V. The next thing affirmed of these venerable patriarchs is,

that though they had not received the promised blessings, "they saw them afar off." Along the line of the promises, down the vista of the ages, behind the cloud of sacrificial and other symbolic administrations, they saw, dimly indeed, as from afar, but still truly, and beyond a doubt, with the clear, strong, eagle vision of faith, the priceless substance, the Lamb of God, bearing and bearing away the sin of the world. This is the true function of faith. It is the telescope of the soul. "We walk by *faith*," says an apostle, "not by *sight*"—plainly implying that our faith stands to us in the place of sight. And here the inspired writer evidently glances back at the description of faith with which he sets out in the opening verse of the chapter, where he calls it "the evidence of things not seen." This account of faith, in the sense we have already explained, equally fits those patriarchs and ourselves. To them it was not given to see Jesus and His work, but in the glass of the prophetic Gospel they looked forward to His day rejoicing, and in this way, with the eye of the mind, they saw it, and were glad, and their faith worked by love, purified the heart, overcame the world, and enabled them to persevere unto the end and lay hold on eternal life. To us it has not been given to see Jesus and His work; but in the far finer, ampler, clearer glass of the historic Gospel we look back to His day rejoicing, and thus seeing and realizing it we too are made glad, repentant, humble, happy, holy, and fired with zeal and courageous ardour to run the heavenward road, and grasp the celestial crown.

We may in all this discern the vital importance of commanding our wayward thoughts and self-denyingly pinioning them down to the vital truths about God preserved for us in the Gospel. Above all, let us avoid the too common mistake of thinking we know all about God's Gospel, when closer study would unfold clearer, larger, and richer views that would immensely strengthen our faith and brighten our hope. But, on the other hand, never let the thought that you have yet

much to know make you doubt for one moment what you already clearly know and see most assuredly to be true; for all truth is consistent with itself; and the more we inquire, the more will our knowledge fit itself in to a blessed and expansive harmony, which will evermore react for the confirmation of our faith and for the progressive illumination of our spiritual horizon. Though we have to look back to the Cross to which they had to look forward, there are other things, even the great realities of the unseen world, to which we, in common with them, must also look forward. We are pressing on, as they did, through a world wherein we are, or ought to be, strangers, to a world which is our true and everlasting home. Now faith is the victory by which we shall overcome—faith is the lodestar by which we shall gain our destination.

“’Tis by the faith of joys to come,
We walk through deserts dark as night;
Till we arrive at heaven our home,
Faith is our guide, and faith our light.
The want of sight she well supplies,
She makes the pearly gates appear;
Far into distant worlds she pries,
And brings eternal glories near.”





XV.

THE PILGRIM PATRIARCHS.

The statements that remain in regard to the ancient worthies specially referred to in the verses under consideration, are closely and logically connected with those that precede. We therefore proceed to dispose of them in unbroken sequence.

VI. The next affirmation made of these patriarchs is, that they "were persuaded of them" (the promises). Here, too, we have an allusion to the description of faith in the opening verse. As the former expression refers to the latter part of that description—"the evidence of things not seen," so this refers to the former—"the substance of things hoped for." The word substance, as we saw, may literally mean, confidence, and is elsewhere repeatedly so rendered; and comes ultimately, at any rate, to subside very much into this sense; the meaning in effect being, that faith is a confident persuasion, in regard to things hoped for—a persuasion, in other words, that these promised blessings shall, without doubt, be bestowed. Such persuasion had those holy patriarchs, with comparatively scanty materials for their faith to operate upon. We have far richer materials: have we as strong a persuasion? Are we as sure of heaven? Have we as close communion with God? Have we got our affections raised as much above the world, and does our hope anchor itself as vigorously within the veil? These are life and death questions. Parry them not; for in the present days of indecision, of thin, sickly, wide-spread Chris-

tianity, how many are there who know not whether even Christ has died for them, much less whether they themselves are reconciled to God and on the way to heaven. In a matter of such infinite concernment disdain to halt between two opinions. In the name of all that is vital to your present and eternal weal, in the name of all that is true and noble, shake off inglorious indecision, determine to purge your eyes of the films of unbelief, and ascertain the entire truth between your soul and your God. If the world or its pleasures be your saviour, then follow them, and honestly enjoy what comfort they may have for you when stretched upon a bed of death. But if Christ be indeed your Saviour; if the Crucified is as really living as any of us are, and is as sure one day to descend through these cleaving heavens and flash, vivid as the lightning sheet, in every eye, as it is sure and certain that the sun this day rose upon the earth, then in Christ's name, and for your soul's sake follow Him—and that now, for there is not a moment to lose. "Behold the judge standeth at the door." "Behold I come as a thief." "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all the kindreds of the nations shall wail because of him." "Choose ye, then, this day whom ye will serve." For mark the solemn alternative: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life that both thou and thy seed may live."

VII. The next thing affirmed of these patriarchs is, that they "embraced them." This was the natural result of persuasion. Had they been able to boast nothing better than the dreamy hope—if we may call it hope—which so many are content with who live under the zenith of Gospel day, we should never, in this connection, have read this word "embraced;" but being "*persuaded*" of the actual reality of the blessings promised, so as to have no more doubt on the subject than of their own existence, they embraced them, greeted them, and exultantly

hailed them from afar. They hailed them from afar as the wanderer greets his loved and longed-for home, even when as yet he but sees the distant hill of his youth; they felt magnetically attracted forward and heavenward by the divinely powerful and persuasive energy of their faith. An ancient poet describes the joy of exiled voyagers when first they descried the fair land of their destination:—

“When we from far, like bluish mists, descry
The hills and then the plains of Italy:
Achates first pronounced the joyful sound;
Then Italy the cheerful crew rebound.”

Many there are, in these changeful days, who, returning after long absence to the dear land where they had left wife and children, or aged parents, or affectionate sisters, know well these emotions when the cloudy headlands or blue peaks of their native coast first come into view. History records with what intensity Christopher Columbus, on setting foot on the New World, threw himself prostrate on the soil he had just discovered, and embraced it with every demonstration of piety and joy. With what emotions also did the pilgrim fathers disembark from the *Mayflower* in the year 1620, and embrace the land of their adoption, and kneel down on that rock of New Plymouth, and amid the hallowed accents of prayer and praise, found a New England, and with it a New World!

And they hailed and grasped at what was before them with all the more eagerness that they knew what was behind them. They had no temptation, like Lot's wife, like the murmuring Israelites, to look back, for the bloody hand of persecution had torn asunder the ties that bound them to their native land, and wintry tempests of tyranny had blown them across the wave, and forced them to look for an asylum in a new and unexplored region. And just so, those Trojans raised with all the more exultation the welcome shout of Italy, that the native Troy they had left behind was now a mass of blackened ruins.

The pilgrim in Bunyan's inimitable allegory ran with all the more speed, and hailed and greeted from afar with all the more exultation, the Delectable Mountains and the golden radiance of the celestial gate, that he remembered the doom that overhung his native city, as often as he recalled its awful name—the city of Destruction. Let us remember the awful fact, true as the Bible, sure as the eternal hills, that this world, and all the works that are therein, shall one day be seen inwrapped, as in a winding sheet, in one envelopment of living flame. It is reserved unto fire. It will be the theatre, one day, of the general judgment, where, amid the congregated hosts of heaven, earth, and hell, the books shall be opened, the quick and dead shall be judged, and the several sentences shall be pronounced whereof the issues shall be final. Nay, even now, before that solemn scene, death's shafts are flying thick, and his victims, heap upon heap, ever replenish his hideous carnival. Let the thought, then, of what is behind you make you flee for your life, and embrace and aspire to the salvation that is before you—"looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." The man who is helmeted with this hope can look up, and "walk on his high places." "He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off" (Isa. xxxiii. 16, 17).

We have, in one of those ancient patriarchs, a beautiful example of this longing, greeting, embracing, forward tending and eagerly grasping act of faith. When the venerable Jacob was disposing of all that was needful as regards earth, in the way of blessing his sons, he could not altogether suspend his genuine forward-looking heart, but had to pause and sweetly exclaim—"I have waited for thy salvation, O God." Such is

ever the attitude of expiring piety. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

VIII. The last affirmation about these patriarchs is, "They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Did they? No doubt, for here, as throughout this chapter, Paul draws not on his inspiration for new facts about these ancients, but sets us a noble example of how to use the facts we have. Nor have we far to seek for such confessions on their part. Abraham in his great sorrow over the deceased partner of his hopes and trials, "stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight" (Gen. xxiii. 3, 4). Jacob not only makes confession to the same effect before Pharaoh, but every expression he uses comes steeped in the profoundest consciousness of pilgrimage. "And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage" (Gen. xlvii. 8, 9). David, long after, with manifest allusion to these patriarchal confessions, exclaims, from the depths of depression: "I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were" (Ps. xxxix. 12). Nor was this a mere passing wail, evoked by a doleful mood. In the climax of his greatness, in the golden eventide of a life to a rare degree crowned with regal majesty and splendour, he reiterates the same confession with concomitant sentiments, which show that it ruled in him as an imperial principle. It was on the spirit-stirring occasion when he commended Solomon to the people, and also the great work of building the Temple, for which he and they had offered so willingly. "Wherefore David blessed

the Lord before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding" (1 Chr. xxix. 10-15).

It will hardly be pretended that by these expressions the ancient patriarchs meant no more than that they were strangers in Canaan, of whose soil, as Stephen expressively puts it, they owned, "no, not so much as to set their foot on" beyond that mournful purchase of a grave. Clearly David expressed no such meaning in the passage just quoted, where he sets forth the evanescence of all mundane glory. As little does he on that prior occasion, in Psalm xxxix., where he utters the same sentiment in connection with the frailty and mortality of man, as when he says: "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity" (Ps. xxxix. 4, 5). And just as little does Jacob to Pharaoh, for the pilgrimage he speaks of is expressly meant for the pilgrimage of life. And no more does Abraham in his words to the children of Heth, for in the desolation of bereavement he feels and speaks of himself as

rapidly posting after his beloved wife, whose very demise, without "having received the promises," though the mother of the child of promise, illustrates and brings home to the mourning patriarch all the more vividly that, personally considered, his portion lay not in Canaan, but in a far other land.

This, the inspired writer, in the passage before us, by no means leaves us to infer—easy and obvious as the inference might be. To guard us against all mistake in that low secularizing direction, the sacred writer furnishes us with the following self-luminous comment: "For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. xi. 14-16). The drift of this is too plain to be well mistaken. The patriarchs, by denominating themselves "strangers and pilgrims," implicitly declared that they were not in possession of a home, but in quest of a home:—for "home," rather than the frigid word "country," represents the true force of the original. That this home, or fatherland, was not their native Chaldea, stands demonstrated by the life-long consistency of their procedure; for amid all their pilgrimages and encampments they never once set their faces eastward to recross the Euphrates, as they might without difficulty have done at any time, and regain a permanent home among the seats and sepulchres of their fathers. "They desired a better" home than either Chaldea or Canaan, "even an heavenly;" and this desire God not only recognized, but rewarded and honoured by deigning "to be called their God" in a profound and far-reaching covenant sense, which pledged the realization of that desire, and by preparing for them, through the coming Saviour and all redemptive arrangements, the rest they sought, and in,

the form they sought. In contrast to the tents they dwelt in, they desired a permanent home; and in fulfilment of that desire "God prepared for them a city." Unlike their movable tents, that city "had foundations;" unlike the proud Babels which the ambitious Nimrods of the earth rear and call by their own names, this city is celestial—its "builder and maker is God."

There is deep significance in the words "he is not ashamed to be called their God." It carries us back to such scenes as Bethel, where heaven opens over the entranced Jacob, and from the top of the mystic ladder the Divine utterance descends: "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land wherein thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed." These words fell on no irresponsive ear. "The God of my father hath been with me," was his solace under the designing Laban; and again in view of encountering the long-nurtured vengeance of his brother Esau, when he began his prayer with the plea, "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac." In such terms was the sublime and far-reaching covenant pleaded by man and renewed by God. Hence, long after, to Moses there came from the heart of the burning bush the solemn and well-remembered formula, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." This was the token and the pledge of the everlasting covenant, a covenant stretching beyond individual life-times, and like that visioned ladder at Bethel, rising and losing itself in the heavenly and the eternal. Hence the message with which Moses was charged to the Israelites: "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" (Gen. xxviii. 13; xxxi. 5; xxxii. 9; Exod. iii. 6, 15).

The depth of significance that lies in the words, "He is not

ashamed to be called their God," may to some extent be gauged by means of the argument for the resurrection which our Lord builds upon them in reply to the Sadducees in Mat. xxii. 31, 32: "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." The reasoning of our Lord in this passage has started cavils in some and occasioned honest difficulty to others. The more it is pondered the more potent, we feel assured, will it be found to be as demonstrating the continued existence of those patriarchs, and therefore the doctrine of immortality and celestial bliss, and, by implication, the resurrection of the body, that their entire humanity might be restored to share in the blessings of the world-wide and everlasting covenant in its final evolutions in the heavenly state. This was the city "they looked for," and which God "prepared for them." This was the many-mansioned home which Jesus, as our Redeemer, has gone before us to prepare, and which, as himself "the first-begotten from the dead," His presence in heaven makes sure. "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 2, 3). This is the city, or constituted state, of which Jesus speaks in Luke xiii. 28, 29. It is this city, and under the self-same contrast to a moving tent, with which, as a true child of Abraham, Paul comforts himself amid his weary pilgrimages, as "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. iv. 16-18; v. 1).

The drift of all we have advanced is, that those patriarchs were strangers and pilgrims in the same sense in which Christians "confess" themselves to be so now (see 1 Pet. ii. 11).

Under the light and warmth of Divine love in the Gospel, the frost-bound river of the believer's spirit begins to melt and move. Instead of cleaving dull and motionless to the dust, the winter of his worldliness has been made glorious summer by the Sun of Righteousness; and along with the joyful sound, and the singing of birds, and all the happy concomitants of his spiritual spring, there greets his ear the loving call, "Arise, my fair one, and come away."

Not that we would speak of God's beautiful world as "this dungeon where we dwell," after the fashion of so much in our hymnologies and elsewhere. The worst feature of these doleful ditties is that they are, in most cases, neither believed nor felt, but are mere hollow and howling cant. Every flower that springs at our feet, and smiles in beauty and fragrance to the sense, rebukes the unworthy sentiment. What a lovely Eden would this world be, physically as well as morally, were there no sin in it!

"The mind is its own place, and as it thinks,
It makes a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."

Forward, then, Christian wayfarer, towards "the joy that is set before you!" Forward with a pilgrim *eye*; seeing things as they are, and estimating their importance according to their bearing on your great future! Forward with a pilgrim *spirit*; not laying it sore to heart if that world which wove for our Captain of Salvation a wreath of thorns should not have smiles and rose-chaplets for his faithful followers! Forward with a pilgrim's *scrip*, containing your provision by the way, containing also your chart, and finding both in that inspired word of which the psalmist says, "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage!" Forward with your pilgrim's *staff*—the promises arrayed in prayer, and pleaded in faith! In a word, forward at a pilgrim's *pace*; not tarrying by the way, or turning

down the world's devious and flowery avenues of tempta but like the pilgrim of Bunyan's allegory, stopping your ea siren songs, and making good your life-journey from "the of Destruction" to the eternal kingdoms! "Arise ye and de for this is not your rest."



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